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Language Arts 20-1

Module 2

Travelling Through Life



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English



Language Arts 20–1

Module 2

Travelling Through Life

English Language Arts 20-1
Module 2: Travelling Through Life
Student Module Booklet
Learning Technologies Branch
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Students	✓
Teachers	✓
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Other	



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Section 2

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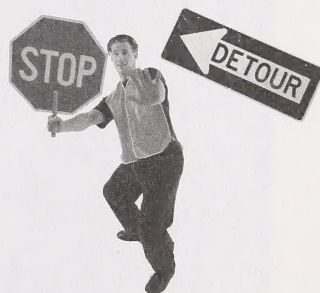
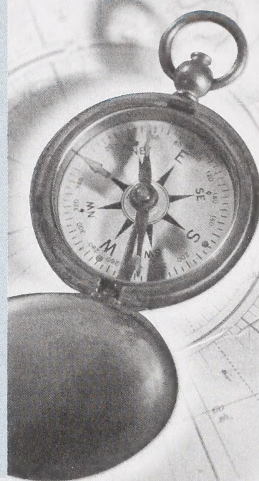
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Looking at English Language Arts 20-1

English Language Arts is an essential part of your education because it teaches you communication skills that you'll use throughout your life. These skills help you connect with other people in your family, community, and workplace, and in the world. As well, your study of literature helps you to understand yourself and other people.

To complete this course, you'll need the following materials:

- seven Student Module Booklets
- fourteen Assignment Booklets
- *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*
- *English Language Arts 20-1 Audio CDs*
- *English Language Arts 20-1 Multimedia Segments* CD-ROM
- *Researching and Making Presentations* CD-ROM
- the Shakespeare play *Macbeth* (Harcourt Canada) (Module 5)
- the novel *Lord of the Flies* (Module 7)
- the play *The Glass Menagerie* (Module 6)
- access to a feature film you will select from an approved list (Module 6)

You are encouraged to make use of the CD-ROMs, which are included in your course package. This course also provides opportunities to search for information on the Internet. Therefore, it would be helpful to have access to a computer with a CD-ROM drive and an Internet connection. If you don't have access to a computer at home or at school, try to arrange to use one at your community library or at the home of a friend.

In addition to the previously mentioned course materials, you should have the following:

- a notebook or binder with lined paper
- a journal (notebook or a folder on your computer)
- a dictionary
- a thesaurus
- a CD player
- an audiocassette recorder and blank audiocassettes to record your voice (or appropriate computer software and hardware)
- a television and VCR
- library facilities (school or public)

Strategies for Completing This Course

Organize your materials and work area before you begin. Be sure that you have everything that you need. You should also have a quiet area in which to work, away from distractions. As well, you should use a calendar to set goals for yourself to complete each module. Create a schedule for yourself, and display it as a reminder.

Many of the learning outcomes that you need to be able to demonstrate in English Language Arts 20-1 involve your skills in working with others. Therefore, you're encouraged to work with a partner throughout this course. In the lessons within each section, you'll often be instructed to work with a partner or in a group. Although it's possible to do much of this work on your own, you'll likely get much more out of it if you collaborate with others. Your partner can be a friend, classmate, or family member. You don't need to work with the same partner all of the time. If you're having problems arranging for a study partner, contact your teacher.

The *Going Further* boxes that you'll encounter in the Student Module Booklets signal optional enrichment material. *Going Further* provides opportunities for you to investigate further or research a topic or concept that you've explored in the lesson. *Going Further* may also give you a chance to apply your knowledge and skills in a practical way. You're encouraged to read the *Going Further* suggestions and occasionally do some of these enrichment activities.

To achieve success in this course, be sure to read all of the directions carefully; work slowly and systematically through the material in the Student Module Booklets. This approach will ensure that you are prepared for your assignments. Try to set realistic goals for yourself each day and each week so that you'll complete each module in a reasonable time. Do your assignments regularly, and don't forget to review and proofread your work before sending it to your teacher. Careful work habits will greatly increase your chances for success in English Language Arts 20-1.



A_{ssessment}

There are two Assignment Booklets for each of the seven modules of this course. Your work in these Assignment Booklets will be submitted to your teacher for evaluation. If you have difficulty with any of the assignments, you should consult your teacher.

Your final mark in this course will be determined by

- the quality of your work in the Assignment Booklets
- your score on the final test
- your performance on any other tests or work that your teacher may assign
- any other criteria established by your teacher or your school

Your teacher or school will provide information about how your marks will be distributed.

I_{con} List

You will find many visual cues in this course. Among them are a number of icons that appear in the margins. Read the following explanations to discover what the various icons prompt you to do.



Read or view a text.



Refer to your *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*.



Use the Internet (optional).



Be sure you've mastered the basics in a mechanical aspect of writing like grammar, spelling, or punctuation.

Develop, use, or learn a strategy to accomplish some goal.



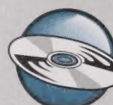
Get together with another person or a group of people.



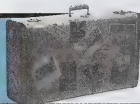
Listen to something on the *English Language Arts 20-1 Audio CD*.



Access information on the *English Language Arts 20-1 Multimedia Segments CD-ROM* or the *Researching and Making Presentations CD-ROM*.



Travelling Through Life



In your journey through life, you've encountered many people and places that have had a tremendous impact on your thoughts and perceptions. As you continue your travels, you'll have many more such experiences. Some will affect you profoundly; others will be of less significance.

Do you enjoy relating your personal experiences—for example, telling a friend about your weekend? Writers share observations and experiences in their stories and poems.

Can you imagine not being able to share the experiences of others? What if you couldn't watch movies and television shows or read books that show you a glimpse of how others live? Even worse, what if you had no means of

Section 1 Close Encounters

Section 2 Life's Journey

Section 3 Unusual Encounters

communicating with your friends about events important to you? If this were the case, you'd be an isolated individual within a society of similarly isolated individuals, your knowledge limited to what you'd personally experienced.

Fortunately, there exist many means of communicating in written, oral, and visual forms; as a result, you can share your "travels" with others, and others can share theirs with you.

In Module 2 you'll be a participant in a number of experiences presented to you through the written and spoken word. This module will help you both enhance your ability to understand literature and develop your own ability to communicate.



Lesson 1: Encounters with the Natural World



Imagine that you and a friend are observing a scene together. Perhaps it's a snow-topped mountain peak, or maybe it's a flock of geese overhead. It's likely that what you see and feel is different from what your friend sees and feels. After all, as human beings we all bring our own unique backgrounds and ways of looking at things to whatever we experience. It's difficult to express feelings of this sort, but good writers use the power of language to communicate their perceptions.

Journaling Prompt

How well can you express the feelings you experience when observing the wonders of nature? Think of an occasion when you've stared up into a night sky full of stars and wondered at what you saw. Write a paragraph or two describing how you felt at that moment.

Were you pleased with your attempts at description in the preceding journal activity? Were you satisfied with your ability to capture the experience accurately and to convey your feelings to others?



To see how someone else has tackled this job, read Sandford Lyne's "Star-Gaze Poem" several times. Try to open yourself to the emotions Lyne was experiencing without comparing them to the ideas in your journal entry.

If possible, discuss your initial thoughts and feelings about the poem with a study partner. Be prepared to modify your understanding of the poem if necessary. After you've done this, respond to the questions that follow the poem.

Star-Gaze Poem

In whatever galaxy,
I believe there must be creatures like ourselves,
dreamers,
savages,
poets,
builders of canoes,
far-scattered eyes moving
against the twinkling darkness of the heavens,
pilgrims
in equivalents of dust,
singers of small laments:
the ones we also know,
so well.

So,
for each such as me
this earth is enough of the possibility of grace.

I step out on my small porch, gaze:

these tiny lights, these beacons, bobbing
so far away in the night
we
cannot hear their bells
marking
the shallows of the universe.



1. a. What emotions do the images in the poem evoke in you? What thoughts or impressions does the poem leave you with about the universe?
- b. Much of the appeal of "Star-Gaze Poem" comes from the vivid images it creates for readers. Identify several images that you found particularly vivid.

¹ Sandford Lyne, "Star-Gaze Poem," in *Literary Experiences: Volume I*, John Oster, Margaret Iveson, and Jill McClay (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1989), 106. Reproduced by permission of the author.

2. Many people who gaze at the stars on a clear night think about the many possible worlds that have yet to be discovered; this can sometimes make a person feel very small and insignificant. Is this true of the speaker of “Star-Gaze Poem”? Explain your response.
3.
 - a. What do you think the poet meant when he wrote the last four lines of the poem?
 - b. Do you empathize with Lyne’s ideas here? Why or why not?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 106.

GOING FURTHER

Could you write a poem like “Star-Gaze Poem”? If you think you can, why don’t you give it a try? Write about something that is personally meaningful to you. Like poet Sandford Lyne, choose specific words to create vivid images. Pay attention to connotations—the emotional charge that words may carry. Revise to eliminate as many unnecessary words as possible. Then celebrate your poem by sharing it with a reader.

If you think that you couldn’t write a poem like “Star-Gaze Poem,” reflect on the reason or reasons why poetry writing is difficult for you. Does poetry writing intimidate you? If it does, you may want to consider Sandford Lyne’s approach.

Lyne has taught poetry writing all across the United States to over 40 000 students from grades 3 to 12. He has even taught thousands of teachers to discover the joy of writing poetry. Lyne is a frequent presenter of poetry writing workshops through the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

If you ever talked to Sandford Lyne or participated in one of his workshops, he would tell you to recognize the importance of writing about things and places you know about from your own personal experiences. He would tell you that it makes no difference who you are, where you live, and what you’ve done with your life; your own life and your experiences are full of poignancy and meaning and are worth writing about.

Use the Internet to learn more about Sandford Lyne. You might also like to use the Internet to find websites that provide tips on writing poetry. One site that you might find useful is the Writer’s Resource Center at the following URL:

<http://www.poewar.com/>

One article that you would find very useful, especially if you’re a little apprehensive about writing poetry, is entitled “Poetry Writing Tips” by John Hewitt. Click on the link *Some Notes on Writing Poetry* under the heading *Poetry* on the Writer’s Resource Center website or use the following URL:

<http://www.poewar.com/articles/poetrytips.htm>



free-verse poetry

poetry that has no particular length, structure, rhythm, or rhyme pattern

I have a question about the poems we've been reading in this course. How come none of them rhyme or have a beat? I always thought that's what poetry was—writing that has a strong, regular rhythm and rhyme.

"Star-Gaze Poem," "Woodtick," and others you've encountered are all examples of **free-verse poetry**. Free verse has no rhyme and no regular rhythm. These elements, while present in some poems, aren't the essence of poetry.

So what is the "essence of poetry"?

Poetry is basically writing that's highly compressed and concentrated. It's full of images, sounds, and poetic devices that create layers of meaning and that arouse in readers and listeners a whole range of emotional responses. Rhyme and a regular rhythm are two of these devices, but they needn't be present.

4. Do you think that "Star-Gaze Poem" fits the description of poetry offered by Mrs. Davonne in the preceding conversation? Explain your response using examples from the poem.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 106.

You know that an astronomer is a person who makes a science of studying the heavens. Scientists sometimes suffer the reputation of being cold and analytical, a reputation that is perhaps undeserved. Or is it?

Observe Walt Whitman's reaction to listening to a well-educated astronomer in his poem "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer." Be sure to read the poem over several times. Then follow the instructions that come after it.



When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before
me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,
and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with
much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

—Walt Whitman

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 1 Assignment, and respond to questions 1 and 2.

You've probably heard of Walt Whitman, even if you've never before encountered any of his poetry. Whitman, who lived from 1819 to 1892, is one of the most famous and best loved of American poets.

Whitman's famous collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass*, (1855) helped introduce readers to free-verse poetry, which was something new at the time. It took a long time for many people to accept poetry without a regular structure, rhyme, or rhythm.

Whitman's openness about the human body and sexuality also shocked his contemporaries. Gradually, however, people throughout the English-speaking world came to admire and love Whitman's exuberant poems expressing his love of the natural world.



If you'd like to read more of Whitman's poetry, you should be able to locate collections in your library. If you search the Internet, you'll find many sites devoted to Whitman, including some that contain many of his poems.



GOING FURTHER

You've now read two poems in which the speakers discuss the night sky. Do you think that Whitman and Sandford Lyne would enjoy observing the night sky together? Demonstrate what their conversation might be like by writing—and recording—a dialogue lasting approximately one minute between the two writers. If you can, get your study partner or a friend to play one part. If you can't manage this, try altering your own voice slightly for one of the two roles.

"Lagoons, Hanlan's Point," by Canadian poet Raymond Souster, describes a young person using a small boat to go on a mission of exploration and discovery. Hanlan's Point, by the way, is on the Toronto Islands, just off the city of Toronto, the poet's home town.



Read "Lagoons, Hanlan's Point" now. Remember to read it over several times and to discuss it with another person if possible. When you're ready, continue the lesson.

Lagoons, Hanlan's Point

Mornings
before the sun's liquid
spilled gradually, flooding
the island's cool cellar,
there was the boat
and the still lagoons,
with the sound of my oars
the only intrusion
over cries of birds
in the marshy shallows,
or the loud thrashing
of the startled crane
rushing the air.

And in one strange
dark, tree-hung entrance,
I followed the sound
of my heart all the way
to the reed-blocked ending,
with the pads of the lily
thick as green-shining film
covering the water.

And in another
where the sun came
to probe the depths
through a shaft of branches,
I saw the skeletons
of brown ships rotting
far below in their burial-ground,
and wondered what strange fish
with what strange colours
swam through these palaces
under the water . . .

A small boy
with a flat-bottomed punt
and an old pair of oars
moving with wonder
through the antechamber
of a waking world.

¹ "Lagoons, Hanlan's Point," by Raymond Souster is reprinted from *Collected Poems of Raymond Souster*, by permission of Oberon Press.

Before going any further, describe your feelings and thoughts on reading “Lagoons, Hanlan’s Point.” What emotions did you experience? What mood did the poem create for you? What does the poem “say” to you?

5. This poem has a strange, almost ghostly, feeling. Remember another piece of literature you’ve read that makes you feel the same way. Describe how the two pieces are similar and how they differ.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 106.

“Lagoons, Hanlan’s Point” is full of vivid imagery that helps the reader or listener share the experience of a small boy exploring the water and shore-line in a punt, a kind of small boat. **Imagery**, you should recall, is the term used for the vivid pictures, sounds, smells, and tastes a poet creates with words.

imagery

words used to “paint” pictures or create sensations for the reader or listener

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 1 Assignment, and respond to questions 3 and 4.

6. Do you think that “Lagoons, Hanlan’s Point” lives up to the definition of poetry as writing that’s compressed, concentrated, and layered with meaning? Explain your response.
7. Imagine that you were going to create a sound track to accompany someone reading “Lagoon, Hanlan’s Point.” Reread each stanza and suggest what sounds you’d include. Bear in mind both the descriptions in the poem and the mood you want the reading to evoke in listeners. You can use different types of sounds on your sound track, including music and natural noises. Remember that a sound track should enhance oral presentation of the poem, but it shouldn’t overwhelm it. Plan your sound track accordingly.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 106.

GOING FURTHER

If you have the equipment, why not actually make a sound track to accompany yourself reading “Lagoon, Hanlan’s Point”? Dig out some music that you think would complement the poem, and record some sounds that would be appropriate. This would be an excellent project to work on with a study partner or a small group of students. You could either record someone reading the poem over the sound track, or have a reading for friends and family members in which you play the sound track in the background.



Raymond Souster is one of Canada’s best-known poets. He’s especially noted for his poems about everyday life in the city. Most readers find his poetry easy to understand after the very first reading, even though, as with all good poems, there’s more hidden below the surface. If you’d like to read more of Souster’s poetry, you should find some in your library either in collections of his work or in poetry **anthologies**. And, of course, you’ll find a good deal of information about Souster on the Internet.

anthology

a collection of literary selections by a variety of writers



Return to the journal entry you wrote just after reading “Lagoons, Hanlan’s Point.” Have your thoughts changed significantly about the poem? Explain what the poem means to you now that you’ve dug into it a little deeper.

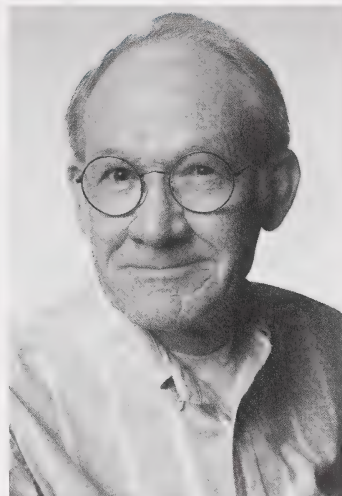
In this lesson, you’ve focused on the natural world. In the next lesson, you’ll be looking at encounters with people who have had an influence on you.

Lesson 2: Encounters with Others

Someone Who Influenced You

Of all the people you've met or will meet throughout the course of your life, some will play a significant role in your life while others will seem to have little influence on you. It's seldom easy to tell right away just how important a role someone will eventually play in your life. Sometimes the least likely individual will have a surprising impact.

What you'll be reading next is an account of two people who had an effect on a young student's life; one effect was positive and the other negative. As you read the account, consider the effects that both people had on the narrator. Perhaps the author continues to be influenced by these effects.



Learn about Canadian writer Erika Ritter's life as a young student by reading the personal essay "Pet Teachers" from the Appendix. Then respond to the following questions.

1. In her essay "Pet Teachers," Erika Ritter contrasts two elementary school teachers who had a positive and a negative effect on her life. Why did she like Miss Riley as much as she did?
2. As you know, a good writer makes a story more enjoyable (and believable) through careful use of detail. Find **one** passage that is particularly vivid for you because of the details it contains and copy it into your notebook.
3. Unless you've been home schooled all your life, you will have had many experiences with a variety of teachers. Think about how your own experiences may have coloured your response to "Pet Teachers." Describe how your own school background likely affected the way you responded to this text.



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 107.

4. Did you find any words in “Pet Teachers” that were new to you? Did you know right away what *tutelage* means? How about *halcyon*? Or *jingoistic*? What about *parochialism* or *temporizing*?

Chances are that some of the vocabulary in the essay is new to you, but it likely didn’t interfere much with your understanding and enjoyment of the selection. Notice how you instinctively employed strategies to deal with each unfamiliar word you encountered—perhaps without even being aware of it.



5. Identify **three or four** strategies you use whenever you encounter unfamiliar words in a passage.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 107.

If you find that you’re having problems understanding many of the words you read and hear, perhaps you need to work on improving your vocabulary. Consider keeping a vocabulary log using a notebook or a folder on your computer; make a list of each unfamiliar word you find. Look the word up in the dictionary and find the definition that best relates to the context in which you encountered the word. Try to learn new words by recording their definitions in your logbook.



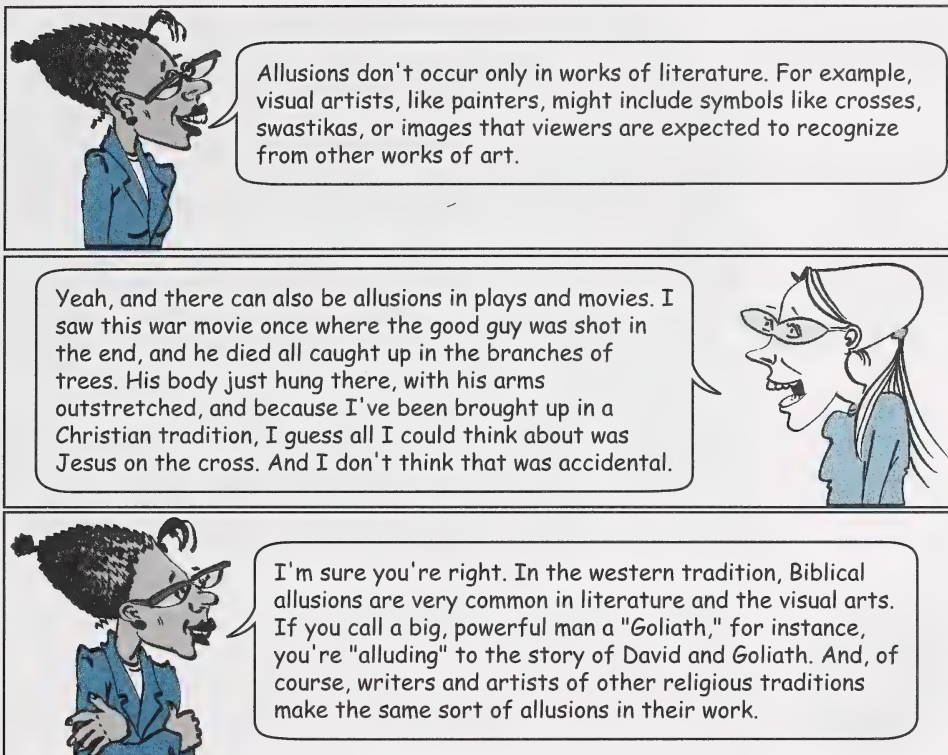
But remember, a vocabulary log is of absolutely no use to you if you don’t learn the words in it. Review these words once in a while and try to use them in your own writing or speech. Take note of the words when you encounter them in other places. Use whatever strategies work for you to make these words your own.

Did you notice the reference to “Thought Police” in the tenth paragraph of “Pet Teachers”? The author writes, “Meanwhile, my teacher’s suspicion that *I* had been the one who’d alerted the Thought Police only exacerbated a relationship already made difficult by the inkspots-on-the-glasses episode.”

allusion

in literature, a reference to someone or something with which the writer assumes readers will be familiar—often an historical, literary, or mythological person or event

You likely understood the writer’s point—that her teacher suspected that she had “squealed” about the class singing an American song in the morning instead of “O Canada.” But did you know that “Thought Police” is a direct reference to the novel *1984* by British writer George Orwell? When writers make references to other literary works or something else they expect their audience to know about, they’re said to be making **allusions**. Understanding allusions is an important factor in being an active reader.



A comic strip with three panels. In the first panel, a man with glasses and a blue jacket is speaking. In the second panel, a woman with glasses and a blue top is speaking. In the third panel, the man is speaking again.

Allusions don't occur only in works of literature. For example, visual artists, like painters, might include symbols like crosses, swastikas, or images that viewers are expected to recognize from other works of art.

Yeah, and there can also be allusions in plays and movies. I saw this war movie once where the good guy was shot in the end, and he died all caught up in the branches of trees. His body just hung there, with his arms outstretched, and because I've been brought up in a Christian tradition, I guess all I could think about was Jesus on the cross. And I don't think that was accidental.

I'm sure you're right. In the western tradition, Biblical allusions are very common in literature and the visual arts. If you call a big, powerful man a "Goliath," for instance, you're "alluding" to the story of David and Goliath. And, of course, writers and artists of other religious traditions make the same sort of allusions in their work.

Whenever you read a literary selection, watch a play or a movie, look at a painting or sculpture, or even listen to a piece of music, try to be aware of any allusions the text creator makes to images, events, ideas, and people outside the work. These references will enrich your understanding and appreciation of the work of art and literature that you're dealing with.

6. Some writing is rich in allusions, others less so. What does the inclusion of many allusions say about the audience that the writer has in mind?
7. Imagine that you're reading a work of literature and you encounter several allusions you don't fully understand. Suggest **at least three** strategies you could use to improve your understanding.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 107.



You've just read a personal essay about an important person in an author's life. Now it's your turn. Write an account of an incident involving a person who was important in your life. Remember that you don't necessarily have to write about someone you really liked, but about someone who had an important, positive influence on you.

In writing your personal essay about the person who positively influenced your life, keep the following instruction in mind. Include enough details and vivid imagery so that the reader can get a sense of actually being there with the person and participating in the events as a silent eyewitness.

Before you write, try some prewriting strategies. Jot down a few feelings about your experiences that relate to the senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste. Try to integrate some of these details into your description.



Erika Ritter, author of "Pet Teachers," was born and raised in western Canada. She's perhaps best known for her playwriting, but she's also a popular writer of essays and works of fiction. On top of this, she is also a well-known host of CBC radio programs. Find out more about Erika Ritter and her writings at your library or on the Internet.

Chance Encounters

If you ever write a novel, you'd better be careful with your use of chance encounters in the plot. If your protagonist gets saved from a dire situation by another character who just happens to arrive in the nick of time, your readers may accuse you of using a **deus ex machina**.

This Latin expression literally means "god from a machine," and refers to a device used by ancient playwrights who couldn't figure out how to resolve the conflicts in their plots. They'd simply lower a "god" onto the stage with ropes, and the god would then solve all of the problems.



deus ex machina

an unlikely, contrived ending to a story, usually resulting from the writer's inability to resolve issues in the plot in a realistic manner

Coincidence must be used skilfully and believably in creative writing, or a reader may find the story hard to believe. However, whether or not a writer has problems using coincidence, the fact is that in real life coincidences and chance encounters do occur, and they can have a very strong impact on a person.

A chance encounter occurs in the poem you'll be reading next—"The Jump Shooter." In the poem, two people share an unspoken encounter by finding common ground on which to communicate. At the end of the poem, you should see that this chance meeting does indeed have an impact on the narrator.

Now turn to the Readings section of the Appendix and read "The Jump Shooter," by Dennis Trudell. After reading it, respond to the following questions.

8. Why was it unnecessary for the two people in the poem to communicate verbally at the playground?
9. Compare the speaker's moods at the beginning and end of the poem. Why the change?
10. Suggest a reason why the speaker leaves the game precisely when he does.
11. Do you play basketball? If you do, the images Trudell creates in "The Jump Shooter" may mean more to you than they do to other people.
 - a. If this reflects your situation, explain how your basketball experiences coloured your response to the poem.
 - b. Whether you're a player, a fan, or someone not particularly interested in basketball at all, find an image from the poem that stands out for you, quote it, and explain why you selected it.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 108.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 1 Assignment, and respond to question 7.

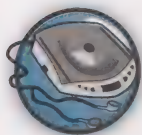
I had a problem when I read the poem. I tried to use the line breaks to guide me, but they seemed to be in all the wrong places.



I know what you mean. There's certainly a regular structure to each stanza, isn't there? But it doesn't seem as though the poet expects readers to follow that structure all the time. Here's an idea: why don't you experiment with different structures and see if you come up with any you prefer?



Whether or not you try to rearrange the poem's structure on paper, you should remember that when reading the poem you shouldn't automatically stop whenever there's a line break. Rather, let the natural sense of the narrative help you decide where to stop, slow down, and add emphasis.



12. Listen to the track titled "The Jump Shooter"¹ on the *English Language Arts 20-1 Audio CD*. You'll hear one person's oral interpretation of the first few stanzas of this poem. Listen to this interpretation; you may not entirely agree with the way this person reads the poem, but it should give you an idea of how it might sound. When you've listened to this track, make your own recording of the poem the way you think it should sound to a listener. Add sound effects if you'd like. For example, a tape recorder at a basketball practice at the gym might make for some interesting complementary sound effects.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 108.

If you still prefer poems that deal with events more important than schoolyard basketball matches, perhaps you'll enjoy this next poem. "The Man He Killed," by English poet and novelist Thomas Hardy, deals with another chance encounter, but it's an encounter of a much more serious nature than that of "The Jump Shooter."



Read "The Man He Killed" now. Remember to read it two or three times. When you're ready, continue with the material that follows the poem.

GOING FURTHER

Thomas Hardy, author of "The Man He Killed," lived from 1840 to 1928. Hardy considered himself first and foremost a poet, but he was forced to write fiction when his poems didn't sell well. Ironically, today Hardy is considered one of the great English novelists of his age, and works like *Return of the Native*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Far from the Madding Crowd* have become classics of English literature. Hardy returned to poetry late in his life, and his *Collected Poems*, published two years after his death, contains over eight hundred selections.

If you'd like to learn more about Thomas Hardy, you'll find a great deal of information on the Internet. But, better yet, why not tackle one of his novels or read more of his poetry? You're sure to find many of Hardy's works at your local library.



¹ Dennis Trudell, "The Jump Shooter," in *Full Court: A Literary Anthology of Basketball* (New York: Breakaway Books, 1996). Reproduced by permission.

The Man He Killed

'Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

'But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

'I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

'He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like—just as I—
Was out of work—had sold his traps—
No other reason why.

'Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.'

—Thomas Hardy

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 1 Assignment, and respond to questions 8 through 11.

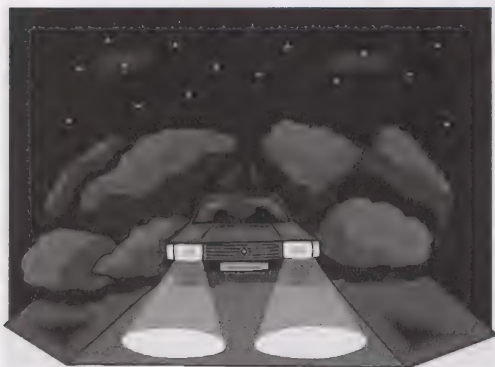
Journal Startlines 3C

Have you had chance encounters in your life that were in some way important to you? Describe an encounter that may have even appeared insignificant at the time, explaining how it was important to you.

In this lesson, you've thought about the effects that chance encounters can have on your life. Whether it's a seemingly insignificant event like shooting a few baskets or a kill-or-be-killed confrontation in battle, chance encounters can affect people profoundly. Lesson 3 will look at the added impact of making difficult life decisions.



Lesson 3: Choices and Decisions



Have you ever had to make an agonizing decision? Perhaps you had no idea what to do; perhaps you knew what you had to do—or what you really should do—but dreaded dealing with the issue. The speaker in the poem “Travelling Through the Dark” undergoes some such moments of agony when he finds a deer that has been struck by a car—a common occurrence on Alberta roads.

The poet is no stranger to this particular problem on this particular road, but this time there’s an added twist.



Now read “Travelling Through the Dark” by American poet William Stafford. As always, read the poem several times. When you’re ready, continue with the material that follows the poem.

Travelling Through the Dark

Travelling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

1

Journal Section 1a

Respond to **one or both** of the suggestions that follow.

- Describe your initial feelings after reading “Travelling Through Dark.” Did you like the poem? Did you find it moving? How did it make you feel?
- The speaker in “Travelling Through the Dark” was faced with a very unpleasant duty. Have you ever been faced with a duty that was necessary but unpleasant? Describe the situation and how you felt about it. On reflecting, are you happy about how you behaved?

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 1 Assignment, and respond to questions 12 through 16.

Some decisions people face may be difficult, but not as agonizing as the one faced by the speaker in “Travelling Through the Dark.” In fact, some decisions, after you’ve considered them carefully, may be based on manageable choices.

When you read the poem “The Fish” by Elizabeth Bishop, you’ll find a person in the position of making a decision that’s both easy and pleasurable. In fact, it might seem that a large part of the decision-making process here is unconscious.

Turn now to the Readings section of the Appendix and read “The Fish.” When you’ve finished, continue with the material that follows.



¹ William Stafford, “Travelling Through the Dark” copyright 1962, 1998 by the Estate of William Stafford. Reprinted from *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems* with the permission of Graywolf Press, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Have you ever killed an animal either accidentally or deliberately? Maybe you're a hunter or a fisher, or maybe you discovered a wounded animal that had to be put out of its misery. Whatever the situation, describe the incident and try to convey in your writing the feelings you experienced.

1. The fish caught by the speaker in this poem is one that most fishermen would be proud to have captured. Yet the speaker ends up releasing it. Why?
2. There's a flood of colour at the end of the poem: "rainbow . . . orange . . . sun-cracked . . . rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!" Why does this barrage of colour seem fitting here?
3. "The Fish" is alive with vivid **images** that describe the fish caught by the speaker.
 - a. Select **five** or **six** examples of imagery in "The Fish" that you found especially vivid.
 - b. Now think of an animal that you know well—a pet, perhaps. Imagine that you were writing a poem describing this animal. Try to come up with **three** or **four** images (examples of imagery) to include in your poem.

Images

word pictures or phrases that create a sensory experience for readers or listeners

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 109.

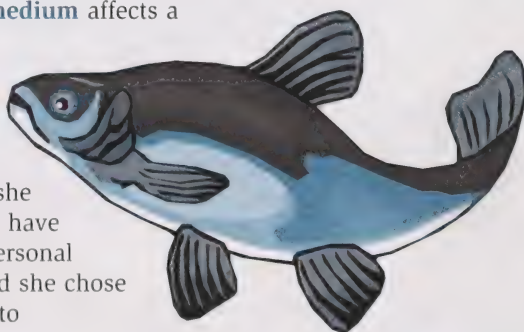


If you wish, go ahead and use your images to create your own poem. Be sure to share your poem with your study partner, family members, and/or friends. You'll have more practice writing poetry in Module 3.

Medium

a means through which a message is communicated

Have you ever thought about how a **medium** affects a message being communicated? For example, in "The Fish," the speaker describes an experience catching a very large, old fish that had eluded fishers for years. She's so moved by the fish's situation and his spirit that she can't bring herself to kill it. She might have described this experience in a short personal essay or even a short story, but instead she chose poetry as the medium through which to communicate her message.

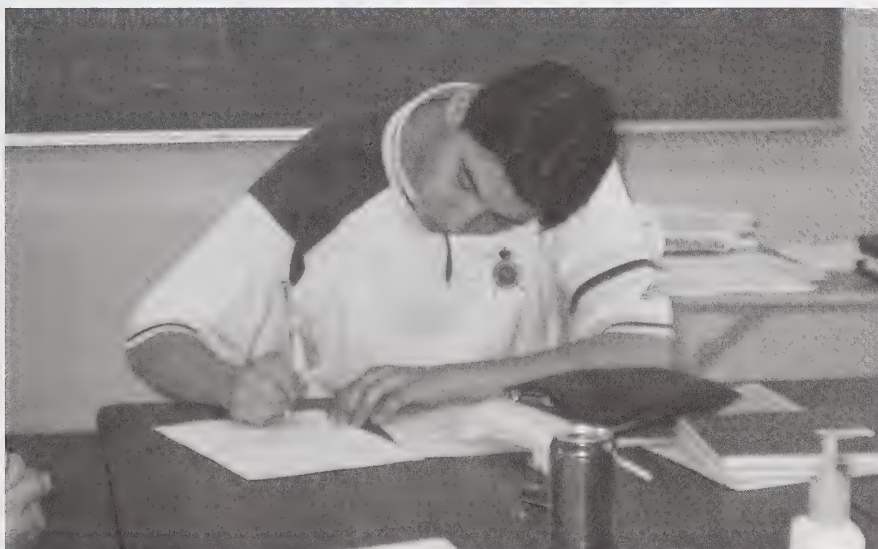


4. What effect did the author's decision to write a poem have on her fishing story? In your response, explain whether or not you think she made the right decision.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 3 on page 109.

In Lesson 3, you've looked at two poems about human relationships to the natural world. Both poems have also been about choices that people have had to make. For a change of pace, Section 1 will finish up with something very different. In Lesson 4, you'll return to the writing process, which you began looking at in Module 1. This time the emphasis will be on the last two of the four stages in the process.

Lesson 4: The Writing Process: Revising, Editing, and Publishing



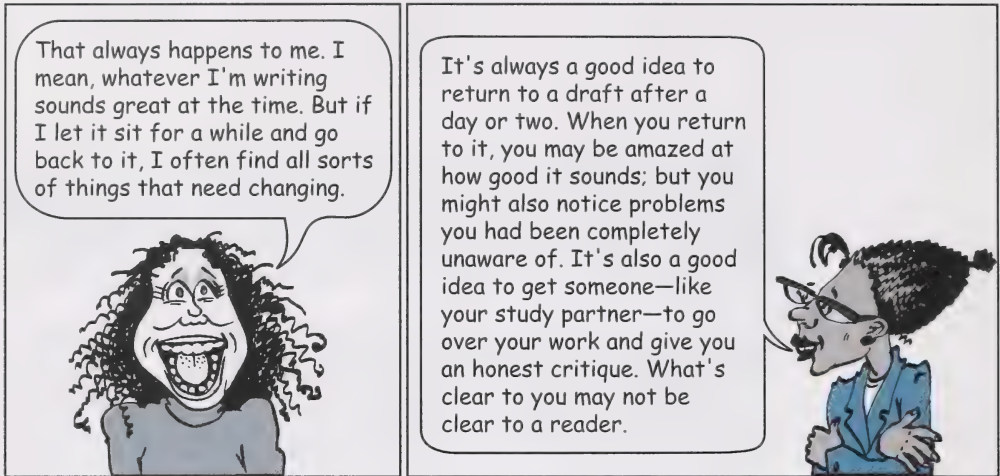
In Module 1 you were introduced to the four stages of the writing process; as well, you examined strategies for prewriting and, to some degree, drafting. Now it's time to look at techniques to use when you reach the revising, editing, and publishing stages.

The literature you've been reading is very likely the product of extensive revision and editing. You might wonder why professional writers need to revise and edit; the truth of the matter is that professional writers usually produce good work because they continuously polish what they write until they're satisfied with the final draft.

Revising Your Work

When you produce written work, the first draft you write is just an early step in the writing process. As you write your first draft, you may still be exploring your position on a particular subject.

You might even find, after reading your first draft, that you now don't entirely agree with what you'd just said. Or you might like what you've said, but not how you've said it.



This, essentially, is what revision is all about. It means reconsidering your ideas by changing and adding words, placing ideas in a different, more effective order, and connecting thoughts together more clearly. This may involve extensive rewriting. Remember, you can always go back to an earlier stage of the writing process if necessary.



1. Do you go through a conscious revision process when writing?
 - a. Outline the steps you take at this stage of the writing process.
 - b. With the help of your study partner, if possible, suggest ways in which you could improve your approach to revisions.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 109.

Some writers use a personalized checklist when they revise their work. The following is an example of one person's revision checklist; if you wish, you can modify it to suit your own needs.

A checklist, remember, is just one strategy you can use to improve your writing. Like any strategy, it can be used, modified, or even ignored depending on your personal needs.

Revision Checklist

- Am I satisfied with the ideas I've presented?
- Are the ideas appropriate for my intended audience?
- Am I on topic?
- Are my ideas appropriate for the topic?
- Was I logical in my reasoning?
- Did I spend appropriate amounts of time on minor and major points?
- Did I explain myself adequately?
- Did I supply adequate support for my arguments?
- Did I use words precisely and effectively?
- Did I vary my sentence structure to avoid a boring, monotonous composition?
- Does my writing honestly reflect my personality and individuality? Does it have an honest "voice"?
- Is the language level appropriate? Does my writing avoid being too formal or too casual for the situation?
- Have I stayed on topic?
- Have I created clear transitions between my ideas?
- Have I achieved my purpose?

- 
2. Can you add more questions to this list? Try to brainstorm ideas with the help of your study partner. Be sure to think about your own writing and focus on areas where you know you need improvement.



Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 109.

Look again at the last three items on the Revision Checklist. Staying on topic and making the connections between your ideas clear to your audience are important skills for any writer. They're also things you should be considering at the revisions stage of the writing process. Now you'll be taking a closer look at each of these matters by considering the importance of unity and coherence.

Achieving Unity in Your Writing

unity

in writing, a singleness of purpose or focus



Unity refers to a oneness or singleness of purpose or focus. Put simply, it means staying on topic. Every story, essay, research paper, or poem you write should have a specific purpose or focus, and it shouldn't stray from it.

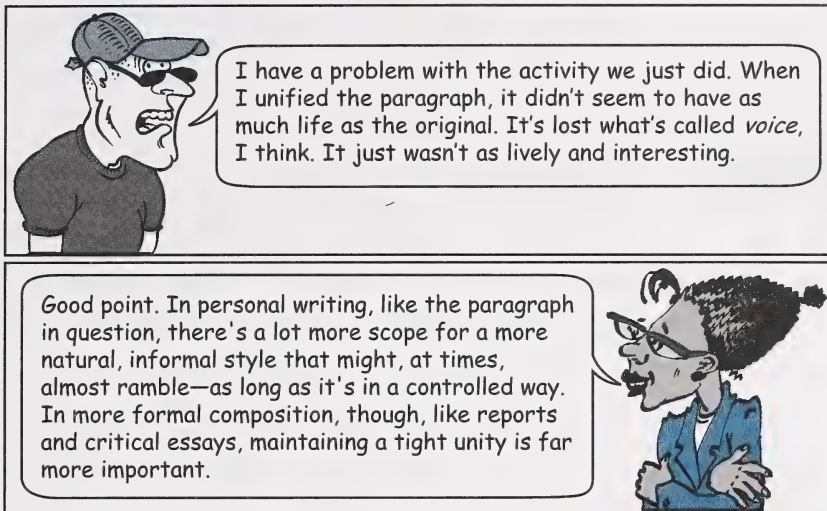
In the same way, a single paragraph within a larger piece of writing should develop a single topic or idea and present it as a unified whole. Whatever you're writing, make sure you don't get sidetracked from your purpose; stick to your topic.

3. Test your sensitivity to unity by examining the following paragraph. Imagine that you'd written it and were now at the revision stage of the writing process. Rewrite the paragraph so that it has a single focus. Feel free to omit irrelevant information, change sentence subjects, or do anything else that you feel is necessary to bring unity to the paragraph.

My favourite summer activity is canoeing. I like swimming a lot too, though, and hiking. My family has a seventeen-foot fiberglass canoe (hand layed-up; none of that blown-fibre stuff for us) that we take to the lake whenever we go, along with all the other equipment we need for life up there—tent, camp stove, supplies, and so on—and my father and I spend a lot of time on the lake in it. We generally stick close to shore and explore all the nooks and crannies of the shoreline, trying to spot wildlife. When we return, Mom always has a delicious meal ready that we can smell even before we hit the beach—usually fish that she's caught herself because she's the fisherman of the family. (Dad can't bring himself to kill anything, even fish.) My dream, though, is to make my own fourteen-foot cedar-strip canoe so I can go out by myself. I'll have to improve my woodworking skills first, I guess, but I already have a book of instructions and my mom will lend me the tools I'd need. And I have a cousin who built his own cedar-strip kayak, and I think I can talk him into helping me.

Compare your responses with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 109.





Maintaining Coherence in Your Writing

Unity alone isn't enough to ensure a well-written, clear composition. What you write must also have **coherence**. If a paragraph or larger piece of writing has coherence, its ideas develop in a smooth, easy-to-follow manner. Coherence depends in part on the order in which you present your ideas; but even if your thoughts are arranged logically, coherence may still be lacking if they aren't tied together in such a way that the connections between them are clear to the reader. Not only does this aid the reader in following your train of thought, but it also makes for a more enjoyable and satisfying reading experience. A jumpy, choppy development of ideas should be avoided.



There are a number of strategies that you can use to ensure that what you write is coherent over and above simply arranging your ideas in a logical order. Here are four that work well:

- Repeat key nouns and verbs frequently. If you start to sound too repetitive, substitute **synonyms**. For example, in a research paper on *Sir John A. Macdonald*, you could frequently repeat such key nouns as *Macdonald*, *Sir John*, and *the Prime Minister*.
- Use pronouns frequently to refer back to key nouns. In the paper on *Macdonald*, the appropriate pronouns to use would be *he*, *him*, *himself*, and *his*.

coherence

in writing, the clear connection of ideas and details



synonyms

words having the same, or very similar, meanings

- Use the pointing words (demonstrative adjectives) *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* to make clear exactly what it is—or who it is—you’re referring to. For example, you could write *that decision* or *these reasons* instead of *the decision* or *the reasons*.

transitional expression

a word or phrase
used to link ideas

- Use connecting words and phrases—generally called **transitional expressions**—to make connections that might otherwise be unclear. If used properly, such expressions (for example, *however*, *nevertheless*, *but*, *for example*, *in fact*, and *at the same time*) not only clarify connections and relationships between ideas and facts but also make for smoother, less choppy, and more pleasing writing. Consider the following example

To make the matter clear, *however*, I also must point out that I do agree with you in part. *Nevertheless*, I think that ultimately you’re wrong. *For example*, you seem unable to give reasons for several of your points. *In fact*, you seldom defend your ideas at all. *In spite of this*, *though*, this is better than your last report.



To learn more about coherence in writing, and creating smooth transitions in particular, turn to page 109 in your *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students* and read through to the end of page 111 (where you’ll find a different approach to a revision checklist). Focus most on the material under the heading *Coherence*. Note all those common transitional expressions listed on page 109 and compare the two paragraphs on page 110. If possible, take a look, as well at the segment titled “Ways of Creating Clarity, Coherence, and Emphasis” on the *English Language Arts 20-1 Multimedia Segments* CD-ROM.



4. Go to your journal and select a first draft of something you’ve written. Choose something you would enjoy working with and developing more fully. Now read what you’ve written and record yourself on an audiotape (or any other technology available to you). Next, play back the tape while reading along; you’ll likely have to do this several times.
 - a. As you listen, pay attention to the coherence of your writing. Are your transitions all clear? If not, use transitional devices, along with any other strategies you choose, to improve the overall coherence of the piece.

- b. When you're satisfied that your transitions are smooth and clear, focus on other aspects of your composition. Rapidly jot new ideas in your margins, circle words that could stand improvement, place question marks where your meaning is vague, and cross out portions you no longer like (feel free to refer to your Revision Checklist and/or the checklist in your handbook). Finally, make a decision about tone; decide if your writing has a sound you like. If you feel that a change is necessary, make suggestions on how the tone should be altered in your margin.
- c. Now that you've read and listened to your first draft, it's time to put into effect the changes you've decided are necessary. Write a revised copy of the first draft you took from your journal. At this stage you're free to make any changes you'd like. You can shift paragraphs, alter ideas, improve wordings, and make changes according to the notes you made in your margin; in fact, you can completely scrap what you've written and start from scratch. You may find that this sends you right back to the prewriting stage, but don't worry if it does: it's all part of the process. You may find it hard to believe, but authors sometimes rewrite novels several times!

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 110.

Editing and Proofreading



Editing, as you'll recall from Module 1, is the process of proofreading and correcting grammatical problems and what are sometimes called *surface errors*. These include things like spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

You should develop your own skills in this area, but you can also get help with editing your work; a friend, parent, or teacher can often point out errors you might miss. It can be surprising what a second pair of eyes can catch.

If you write with a computer, features of the word-processing application you use can also be useful at the editing stage—things like spelling checkers and even grammar checkers. And if you have access to the Internet, you can get help online. Still, it's

important to become as proficient as you can at spotting and repairing such problems yourself; you certainly can't yet rely on your computer to catch anything more than very obvious errors. Ultimately, a dictionary, a thesaurus, and your writer's handbook are still the best tools to use.



Take a look at the Editing Checklist on page 112 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*. Later in this course, you'll be briefly reviewing most of the grammatical issues listed there, but you should already have a good degree of mastery over all these matters.

If you regularly find that your teacher reminds you of any of the points listed—run-on sentences, for instance—it will be your responsibility to use any resources available and whatever strategies you can devise to correct the problem.

Remember, the editing-and-proofreading stage is the place where you prepare to produce that final, error-free copy. In both the revising and the editing-and-proofreading stages, don't be afraid to mark up your work if you're writing things out by hand. In fact, it's probably safe to say that the more marked up it is, the better the job you've done. It's only when you write out your final copy, making the changes you feel necessary, that you should be concerned with the physical appearance.



If you find that you have trouble catching spelling errors when you sit down to edit and proofread your work, here's a strategy that might help: try reading your work backwards—from the bottom right-hand corner to the top left-hand corner. This trick forces you to forget all about the words' meanings, so you don't have the same tendency to skim. You'll be surprised at how each individual word will jump out at you.

GOING FURTHER

Try practising this last technique now. Take something you've written—from your journal or elsewhere—and proofread it for spelling errors from end to beginning. If you've made errors, you should catch them. And remember, if you aren't sure how a word's spelled, look it up in your dictionary.



5. Now try your hand at editing and proofreading. Take the same piece of writing from your journal that you used for Question 4. Go through the composition for mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and other surface errors. Make the corrections that seem necessary. Use that Editing Checklist on page 112 of your handbook along with any other tools that are necessary. Get your study partner to review your corrections when you've finished editing.



Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 110.

Whenever you're trying to produce a piece of finished, polished writing, remember the revising and editing stages. Thomas Edison, who invented the electric light and the phonograph, among many other things, once said that "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." It takes work to turn a good idea into a finished piece of writing; don't let inspiration die because you aren't willing to put in the perspiration, too.



Publishing

The final stage of the writing process is the publishing stage. It's here that you produce your polished copy, as well-written and error-free as possible, and share it with others. Perhaps you'll create a title page and/or illustrations to enhance your composition, depending on the situation. Your final copy may be handwritten, or it may be printed from an electronic file on a computer. The polished copy may also be the computer file itself, which you'll send to others electronically or even publish online.

Depending on the form your final copy takes, there are different rules and standards to be aware of. For example, if you're working with a computer, you'll have to think about fonts, point sizes, and layout. By contrast, if you're using pen and paper, matters like handwriting must be considered.

For a brief discussion of the publishing stage of the writing process, read over pages 113 and 114 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*. You'll be expected to know the publishing expectations and standards for the work you do in this course, so take careful note of the points covered there. For example, if you're asked to create a title page, refer to the list on page 113.



You should get into the habit of taking pride in the work you hand in or share with others. And that pride should extend to the physical appearance of that work. Never hand in anything wrinkled, smudged, or stained, and be sure to pay attention to layout, spacing, fonts, styles, and handwriting. When you're out in the working world, your boss will expect this of you, so it's a good idea to get into the habit now.

Of course, the very last part of the publishing process is sharing your work. This can go beyond simply handing it into a teacher. Have you ever been on a bus where poetry was displayed, often by students like yourself? If you've written something you're proud of, celebrate the fact! Laminate your copy and pass it around. Make a poster to complement it and see if you can display it on a school wall. Post it on the Web! Read it aloud in a group. Or, at the very least, share it with friends and family members.



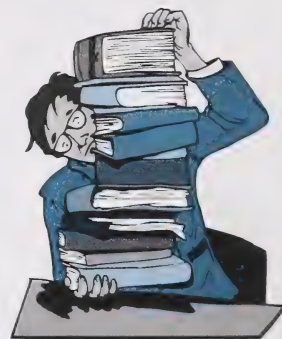
Publishing a text that you've worked hard to create and that you're proud to share with others is an event worthy of recognition. Likewise, the successful completion of a task, project, assignment, or milestone in one's life is a reason to celebrate. If you'd like to find out more ways for students to celebrate and honour each other, refer to the *English Language Arts 20-1 Multimedia Segments* CD-ROM and watch the segment titled "Using Language and Images to Celebrate Achievements."

An Eye on Grammar: Verb Agreement



One of the many things you should look out for whenever you're editing your written work is correct agreement between the subjects of your sentences and your verbs. You should also make sure that you don't switch your verb tenses around unnecessarily. If this sounds confusing to you, work through the questions that follow to help clarify these issues.

6. Each of the following sentences is written twice. For each pair, select the one with the correctly used verb.
- a. Neither Alison nor Leroy is working.
Neither Alison nor Leroy are working.
 - b. Here's the books you lent me.
Here are the books you lent me.
 - c. She's one of the girls who's coming over.
She's one of the girls who are coming over.
 - d. Gage, along with all his classmates, was happy just to be alive.
Gage, along with all his classmates, were happy just to be alive.
 - e. Each of us, it seemed (and there were seventeen in all), was amazed at the final result.
Each of us, it seemed (and there were seventeen in all), were amazed at the final result.
 - f. A series of murders is what tipped off the police.
A series of murders are what tipped off the police.
 - g. Marinna and her friends was standing at the prearranged meeting spot.
Marinna and her friends were standing at the prearranged meeting spot.
 - h. There's going to be many unhappy fans after that game.
There are going to be many unhappy fans after that game.
 - i. He's one of the many people from our school who's going to the concert.
He's one of the many people from our school who are going to the concert.



- j. The winter Olympics happen every four years.
The winter Olympics happens every four years.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 110.



So, how did you do? If you had any difficulties deciding whether to use a singular or plural verb, study the explanations in the Suggested Response to Question 6 carefully. Then turn to page 76 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*, and study the material under the heading *Subject/Verb Agreement*—as far as the top of page 80. Be sure you understand each of these points:

- finding the precise subject
- collective nouns
- compound subjects
- indefinite pronouns

If any of this material still seems confusing, refer to other parts of the handbook for more help. For instance, if you're unsure about how the subject of a sentence or a clause works, use the index or the table of contents for more information on subjects. If you still feel that you need help, contact your teacher.

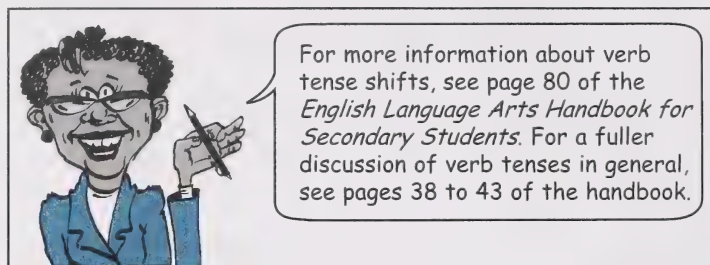
You should also be aware of verb tense while editing. For instance, if you're writing in the past tense, you should be careful not to accidentally switch into the present. Here's an example:

On Saturday, I went with my best friend, Dan, to the city. Dan did the driving because we took his parents' car. Anyway, we just get into the city when this idiot pulls out into our lane right in front of us. The guy never signals or anything, and all Dan managed to do was stand on the brakes. There's this loud squealing of tires, and I'm sitting with my hands on the dashboard braced for the crash; but we managed to stop just in time. Man, was that close.



Did you notice how this writer kept switching his tenses? He started writing in the past tense (“I went,” “Dan did,” and “we took”) but then switched into the present (“we just get,” “this idiot pulls,” “this guy never signals.”) Then he switches back into the past, then goes to the present again, and finally ends up as he’d begun—in the past tense.

Are you ever guilty of accidental tense shifts? It’s something that can happen quite naturally in conversation, but it shouldn’t happen when you write—unless, of course, you’re striving to capture an authentic feel in a dialogue or conversation in a work of fiction. Whenever you edit your work, keep an eye out for inadvertent tense shifts.



In Activity 4, you’ve looked at the final three stages of the writing process: revising, editing, and publishing. Make use of the writing process whenever you write anything you want to share with others. Remember its inherent recursive nature—that is, the way you can return to earlier stages at any time. As with anything you want to do well, writing takes work; but the rewards can make all that work very worthwhile.

Conclusion



Section 1 of Module 2 has been about encounters, and you've "encountered" several literary selections as you worked through this section. These selections should have shown you how even brief encounters with people and places can be significant events in people's lives. They should also have offered more evidence of how important to the communication process it is to have interaction between a writer and an active reader. In the next section you'll continue this process of exploration, focusing chiefly on the metaphor of life as a journey.

Turn to Assignment Booklet 2A, and complete the remaining question for this section.

S

ection 2: Life's Journey

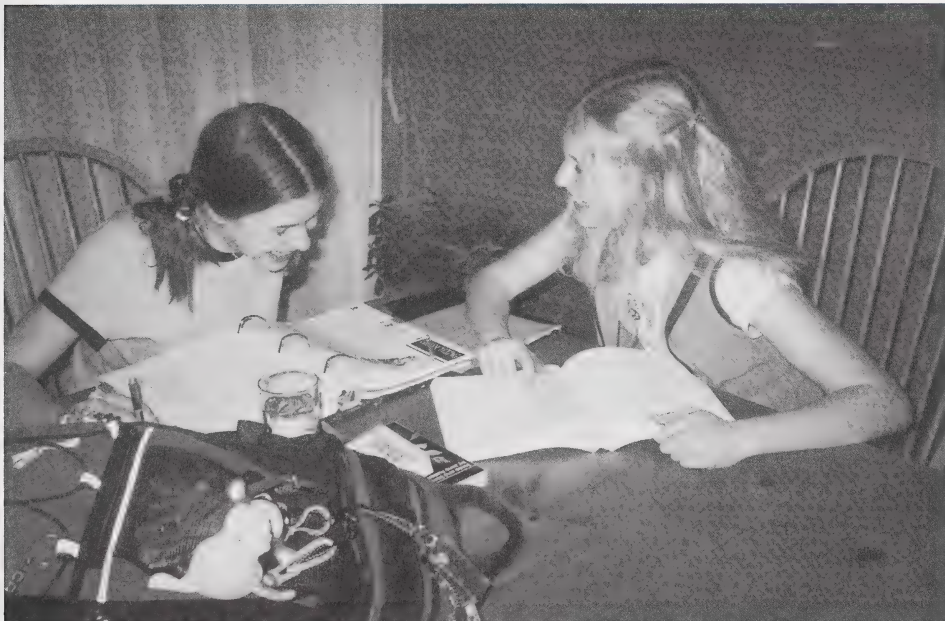
Have you ever travelled places where you needed to use a road map? If you were to think of life itself as a journey, what kind of map would you refer to when you needed guidance? Would you want a map that would help you determine the direction of your life? How about a map that would tell you where you'd been? And who would you want to draw the map?

Such questions are metaphorical. You already know what metaphors are, but you'll be thinking more about metaphors in this section than perhaps you have in the past. You'll also get the chance to reacquaint yourself with other types of figurative language that will likely be familiar; such as similes and personification. To finish up the section, you'll work on your skills relating to reading and writing scripts.

As you work through Section 2, you'll be reading a play that makes use of a controlling metaphor, and you'll get the chance to create some metaphors of your own. By the end of this section, you should be able to apply your understanding of figurative language in interpreting and writing poetry. You should also be able to demonstrate your skills in reading and writing scripts.



Lesson 1: The Metaphor and Some Cousins



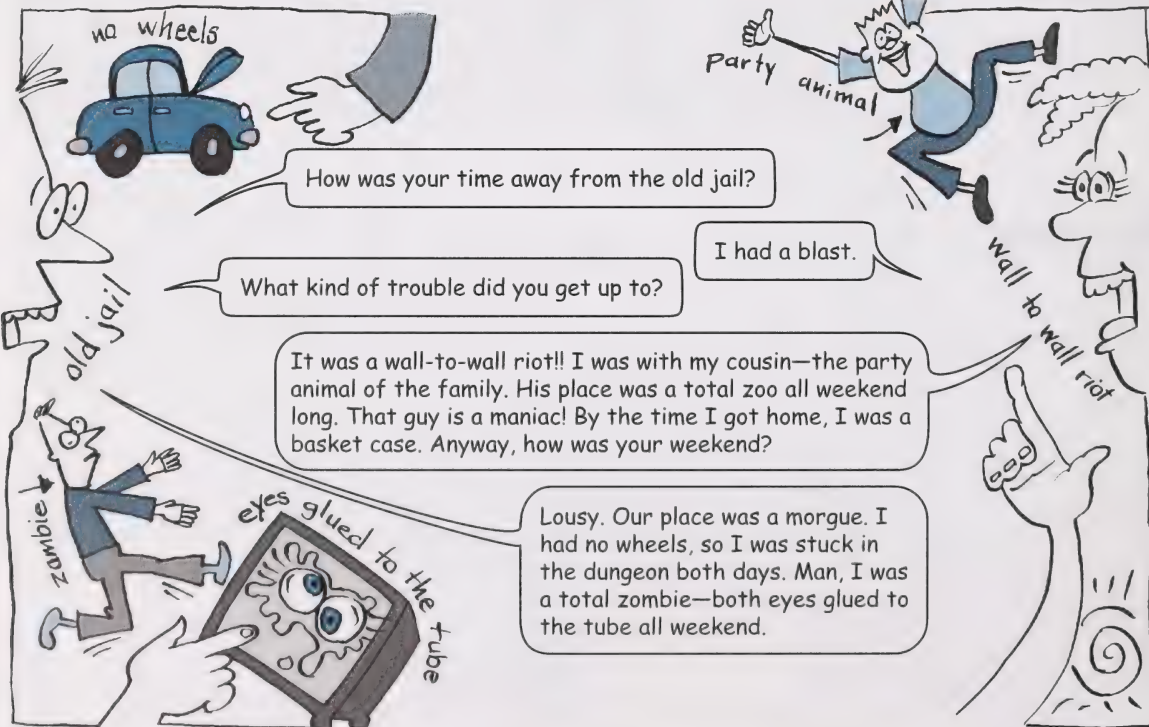
metaphor

a comparison between two unlike things without using the words *like* or *as*

The title of this lesson may have struck you as a bit bizarre. It's true that in a literal sense only living things have families; but when you speak metaphorically, all kinds of things can have brothers, sisters, cousins, and parents. When you use a **metaphor**, you state or imply indirectly that one thing is like something else.

For instance, in saying that a metaphor has cousins, the implication is that it's like a member of a family. When you say a business has gone "belly-up," you really mean that it's gone bankrupt; but since a business doesn't have a belly, you're implying that it's like a living being—in this case, a dead fish or some other animal floating in the water.

No doubt metaphors are very familiar to you. You've almost certainly studied them in past courses—perhaps as far back as the elementary grades. And whether you know it or not, you use metaphors often in your everyday speech. Compare the two brief exchanges that follow.



Perhaps the second dialogue is a bit forced; maybe some of the expressions it uses aren't ones you'd use yourself. But you have to admit that it's more lively and colourful than the first dialogue. Do you see the metaphors? The second speaker's weekend wasn't actually a riot, and her cousin is a person, not an animal. And chances are that he isn't really a maniac. No doubt you see the other metaphors in both speakers' lines as well.

Whenever people use expressions like these, they're making comparisons, but note that they're direct. The one speaker isn't saying that he spent time in a basement that **seemed like** a dungeon (though this is what he meant); he's saying that his basement **is** a dungeon—and that he **was** a zombie. Similarly, whenever you say that homework is a pain, your little brother (or sister) is a monster, or that English Language Arts 20-1 is a breeze, you're using metaphors.

The Metaphor Family

figurative language

language that goes beyond its literal meaning

figures of speech

expressions in which words are used in unusual ways to create special effects

Metaphors are part of the family known as **figurative language**. The members of this family are called **figures of speech**. You use figures of speech when your words don't mean exactly what the dictionary might say they mean. Calling someone a chicken doesn't mean that person is an egg-laying domestic fowl; you know that it's a term implying cowardice.

Language used literally displays its meaning on the surface; it means just what it says it means and no more. Language used figuratively makes richer meanings by combining ideas and images in new and interesting ways.

Here's another example: if a writer says "Her hair was fair," this is a literal statement. By contrast, if the writer says "Her hair was pure gold," or "Her hair shone like the sun," figurative language is being used. You can see that figurative language allows for much more colourful, vibrant descriptions than literal language does.

1. Here are five phrases—some literal, some figurative. Decide how each is being used.
 - a. fire dancing merrily
 - b. eyes like jewels
 - c. a rainy day
 - d. a kind man
 - e. a class clown



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 110.

Write two descriptions of your room using metaphors as much as possible. Take a different point of view in each description—perhaps that of a parent in one and that of yourself in the other. Remember, these very different perspectives should translate into equally different metaphors.

literal speech

language that uses words according to their dictionary meanings

Your language probably consists of a mixture of figurative and **literal speech**. When you can understand a language both literally and figuratively, perhaps then you can be said to be truly fluent in that language.

In this lesson, you'll be thinking more about the family of figurative language; in particular, you'll be looking at similes, personification, apostrophes, and metaphors. Remember that this is a large and complicated family, and these four terms make up only a small portion of it.

Figurative Language: Making Things Come Alive

The Simile

simile

a comparison of two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*

When you use a **simile** (as you should remember from earlier years) you compare one thing quite directly to another; the words you use in creating a simile are usually *like* or *as*. Here are two simple examples of similes:

- The stars are like diamonds.
 - The prairie was as dry as a desert.
2. Elizabeth Bishop uses similes in the vivid images she creates in "The Fish." Go to the Readings section of the Appendix and reread "The Fish." Quote **three** similes that you found particularly effective. Explain why you found each so vivid.
 3. Study the scene pictured here. Then describe it using **two** or **three** similes.



4. Now use each of the words or phrases that follow in a simile of your own. Try to think of something unusual—something that would make a reader or listener stop and take notice. If you can, have a bit of fun with this. The first one is done as an example.

a. moon

The moon hung in the sky like a loonie tossed in the air with a flick of the thumb.

b. lake

c. the villain in a movie

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 110.

The Metaphor

While poets do use similes (you’ve just found a few in “The Fish”), their most interesting comparisons are more often metaphors. This is true of other writers as well. The directness of a simile, and its use of the words *like* and *as*, tend to limit the impact of this figure of speech. However, saying or implying that one thing actually is another packs a stronger punch.

You should note that some metaphors are direct, while some are implied. If a poet says “the stars are diamonds,” a direct metaphor has been made. If, on the other hand, the poet says “the stars sailed majestically through the night sky,” the result is an implied metaphor. Readers aren’t told directly that the stars are being compared to ships, but they infer that this comparison is being made. In good poetry, implied metaphors are often more powerful, and poets expect active readers to be ready and willing to make inferences.



5. Here’s a list of not-so-obvious, implied metaphors. Explain what’s being compared in each example.
- The stars sailed across the sky.
 - The leaves were whispering secrets in the wind.
 - She struggled to move the rubble, but it mocked her futile attempts.
 - The car sputtered, gasped, and then sprang to life.
 - Suddenly the idea clicked on in his head and shone with a steady light.

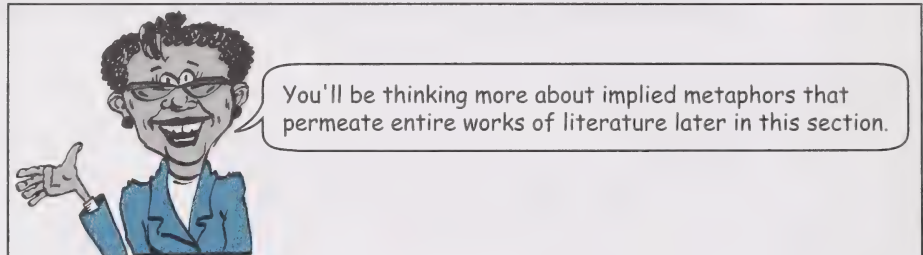
Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 111.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to questions 1 and 2.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes an entire poem—or even a short story—can be thought of as an implied metaphor? For instance, “Lagoons, Hanlan’s Point” can be considered a metaphor for growing up and losing one’s innocence.

6. Think again about “Travelling Through the Dark.” Suggest an implied metaphor for this whole poem.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 111.



7. Now here’s a chance to create some metaphors of your own. Write a direct metaphor on each of the following subjects:
 - a. a breeze
 - b. a car
 - c. isolation
8. Now try writing an implied metaphor for each of these same objects. This is a bit trickier, so the first has been done to get you started.
 - a. a breeze: *The playful breeze chased the ball around the yard.*
 - b. a car
 - c. isolation

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 111.

GOING FURTHER

No doubt some of the questions you’ve answered in this activity have created vivid—and in some cases, comic—images in your mind. What would a playful breeze chasing a ball around a yard look like if you could see it? Have some fun and create a cartoon or another image that brings a metaphor to life. Be as imaginative—and as silly—as you can.

Personification

personification

the assigning of human qualities to non-human subjects

You use **personification** when you attribute human traits to a non-human object. Here are two examples:

- The wind cried softly.
- The waves danced along the shoreline.

Note that in these two examples the personification is implicit, not direct. You aren't told that the wind or the waves are acting in a human manner; this is something an active reader infers from the description.

9. Study the scene pictured here; then describe it using personification. Aim for **two** different descriptions.



10. Now describe the words that follow using personification.

- a. sun b. clouds c. a car

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 111.

You should be able to see why personification is included in the metaphor family. Personification is, in fact, a kind of metaphor—the kind where something is said to be human in some respect. For example, in “The Fish,” the speaker describes the fish she caught by saying “. . . a five-haired beard of wisdom/trailing from his aching jaw.”

At one level this is a direct metaphor: the old fishing hooks and the attached lines are being compared to a beard. At a deeper level, there’s an implied metaphor: the fish is being compared to a wise, ancient, bearded man. And, of course, this second-level metaphor is personification: the fish is being compared to a human being.

11. Reread “Travelling Through the Dark.” Can you find an example of personification there? If so, quote it.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 112.

Apostrophe

apostrophe

the addressing of
an object or an
absent person in a
work of literature

You’re probably very used to dealing with apostrophes—though you may still have problems deciding when to use one in a sentence. But the word **apostrophe** doesn’t always refer to a punctuation mark. In an entirely different usage, *apostrophe* refers to a way of using language figuratively.

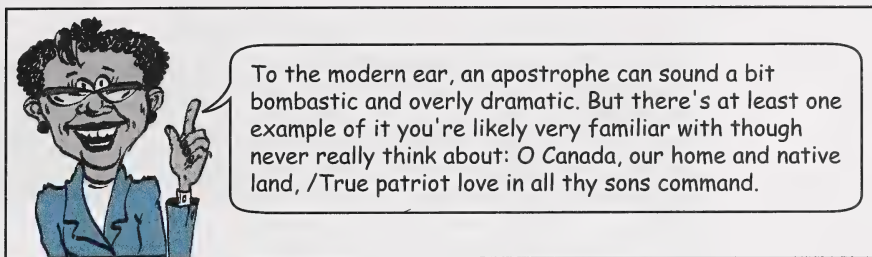
Generally, it means the way the speakers in some types of poetry address non-human objects as if they were people who could hear them. Or perhaps, in the same way, they address people who are far away or long since dead.

Apostrophe doesn’t occur only in poetry. Sometimes creators of other literary texts will “apostrophize” something or someone by addressing words to it, him, or her. In ancient Rome, for example, this was frequently done by people making public speeches. But today, most instances of apostrophe you’ll encounter will be in poems—and probably in older poems rather than more modern ones.

Why is apostrophe considered a figure of speech? Do you ever actually talk to the wind? Do you ever address a beautiful spring morning? Probably not. Poets who use apostrophe are, in effect, personifying the objects their speakers address; they’re giving them human qualities. So apostrophe, like personification, is a member of the metaphor family.

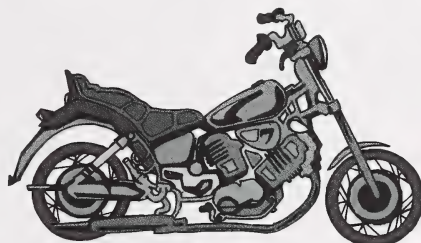
Here are two examples of apostrophe:

- Wind, do not mourn the passing of the season.
- O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

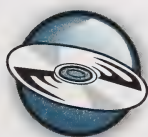


12. You might find it fun to use apostrophe (after all, you probably used it as a child when you sang “Twinkle, twinkle, little star.”) Pretend you’re going to write some poetry. Think of a first line, using apostrophe, for each of the following subjects:
 - a. the night sky
 - b. a robin hunting for worms on a lawn
 - c. the Rocky Mountains

13. Using apostrophe allows writers to transcend time and space. As a poet, try a few more first lines as explained in what follows.
 - a. Use apostrophe to bring forward someone from your past (for example, a relative, a friend, an ancestor).
 - b. Use apostrophe to address a non-human object that has a special meaning for you (for example, a motorcycle, a pair of skates, a favourite article of clothing).
 - c. Use apostrophe to address your readers (“O reader, . . .”).

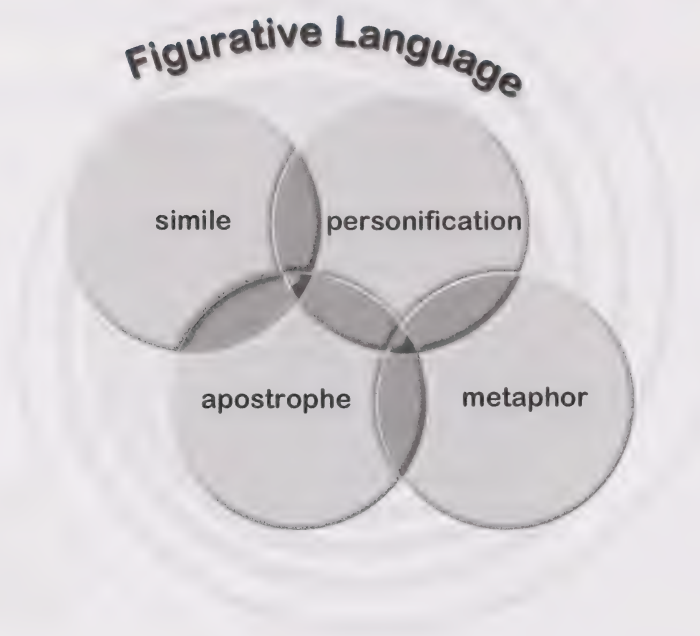


Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 112.



If you’d like to find out more about various figures of speech, refer to the *English Language Arts 20-1 Multimedia Segments* CD-ROM and watch the segments titled “Effects of Musical Devices and Figures of Speech” and “Effects of Figures of Speech and Musical Devices.” These segments deal with figures of speech such as alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia, in addition to metaphors and similes. As well, the segments discuss how some of these figures of speech are musical devices that help create a sense of rhythm in written and oral texts.

Lesson 2: The Metaphor Family—A Broader View



Figures of Speech at Work

As you noted in Lesson 1, there's a lot of overlapping in the metaphor family. Personification, for example, is a type of metaphor, but it's a special type in which the comparison is made between a person and something non-human. Similarly, apostrophe can be a type of personification. If a poet addresses the night sky, saying perhaps "O starry heavens," the sky is being treated as a human audience.



Bearing this in mind, take a few minutes now and read the poem "In the Dome Car of the 'Canadian' " by Alberta writer Sid Marty. As always, read the poem two or three times; then, when you're ready, continue with the lesson.

In the Dome Car of the 'Canadian'

The mongoloid boy is astounded
with joy at terrific
white-fanged mountains

The shining makes him cry aloud

Tunnels through stone to him
are mysteries, are happy as the womb
And equally happy to him alone
embraced by folly's equanimity
was his birth in this bright world

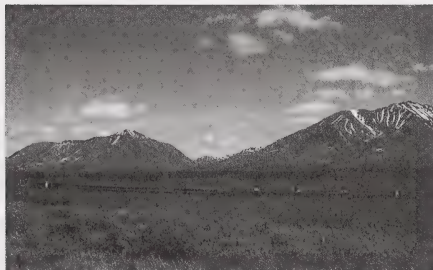
He claps his hand over his mouth
and moans with ecstasy
to be swallowed whole again
then borne into the glimmering light

These boats along the Fraser
trailing their glistening sweepers
of logs along the river
are arks of all creation
rocking on the dappled water

Oh passengers, you travellers
may strain your eyes to blindness
but never again you'll see
what he is seeing

As he dances in the aisles, for joy

1

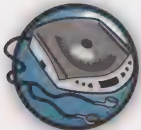


¹ Sid Marty, "In the Dome Car of the 'Canadian'," in *Nobody Danced with Miss Rodeo* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1981). Reproduced by permission of the author.

Describe your reaction to “In the Dome Car of the ‘Canadian’.” How did it make you feel? What did it make you think of? What message do you think the poet hoped to communicate with this work?



Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to questions 3 and 4.



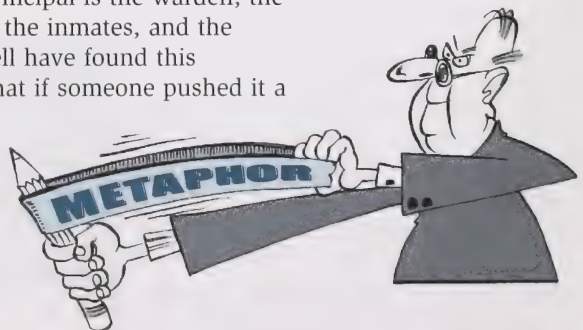
Before moving on, listen in on a brief classroom discussion about “In the Dome Car of the ‘Canadian’” by turning to the track with that title on the *English Language Arts 20-1 Audio CD*. When you’ve listened to this discussion, continue the lesson.



Sid Marty, author of “In the Dome Car of the ‘Canadian’,” is a well-known Alberta writer, singer/songwriter, and environmentalist. In his younger days, as a ranger in Alberta’s mountain parks, he worked as a mountain climber, firefighter, wildlife custodian, and member of rescue teams. You can learn more about this accomplished Albertan on the Internet with the help of a search engine. If you’d like to read more of his poetry or try his prose writing, you’ll likely find something at your library.

Stretching Metaphors

At some point in your life, you’ve probably heard someone say that school is a prison: the principal is the warden, the teachers the guards, the students the inmates, and the classrooms the cells. You may well have found this metaphor rather accurate. But what if someone pushed it a little farther, claiming that students are in school only to be punished and that the teachers’ sole purpose is to maintain order and prevent escapes? The school/prison metaphor has now been stretched too far; as a result it’s lost its impact.



Ultimately all metaphors break down if they're pushed too far, which is natural: a metaphor compares two things that are essentially unlike each other. If you try to push what similarity they have too far, you'll end up going past the breaking point.

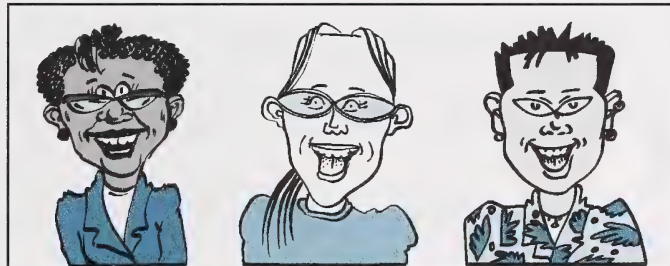


1. Just how far will a comparison go? At what point does it simply stop working and become silly? The chart that follows compares and contrasts diamonds and stars. Construct one that's similar and fill it in, trying to think of ways in which diamonds and stars are both similar and dissimilar. The chart has been started for you. If you can, work on your chart with a study partner.

Diamonds and Stars	
Similarities	Differences
• <i>Stars and diamonds twinkle.</i>	• <i>Stars are masses of fire.</i> • <i>Diamonds are crystals.</i>

Compare your chart with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 2 on page 112.

Poets always have to be careful not to push metaphorical comparisons too far. At some point, a belaboured metaphor will just break down and ruin the whole effect.



Anita: So why do poets use so many metaphors anyway? Why don't they just come out and say what they mean?

Mrs. Davonne: Well, metaphors pack a lot of punch. Remember a poet's purpose: to say a lot—often on several levels of meaning—with a minimum number of words. Saying something by way of a metaphor usually has more impact than stating it literally.

Anita: So if I wanted to convey a feeling of happiness about, say, getting my driver's licence, a metaphor might be "I could feel the bars disappear from my cage." Right?

Mrs. Davonne: You've got it. And isn't that more effective than saying, "The licence, I knew, would give me more freedom than I'd had before"? Doesn't it have more feeling?

Kai: So that's why the poet in "Travelling Through the Dark" gave his poem that name—because he was implying more than just travelling on a dark night.

Mrs. Davonne: Yes. He was also saying that people travel through the dark in their daily lives. Sometimes they're in the dark about doing what's right. Can you see how else life is like that road he was on?

Kai: Sure. On that road you don't know what's lying ahead of you because it's a narrow, winding, dark path. In fact, if that road is like life, you're not going to get far if you're always swerving; and he said that the only time he "swerved" was when he thought about the unborn fawn. The more I think about it, the more it seems to me that "travelling through the dark" is a pretty important metaphor for the rest of the poem—and for life.

Mrs. Davonne: That's true. When you have a dominant metaphor in a work of literature like that, it's sometimes called the work's *controlling metaphor*.

The Controlling Metaphor

controlling metaphor

a dominant metaphor that runs throughout a literary work

A literary work that has a dominant metaphor can be said to have a **controlling metaphor**. You've already thought about controlling metaphors for "Travelling Through the Dark" and "Lagoons, Hanlan's Point," though you weren't using the term then.

The next poem you'll be reading has a controlling metaphor, and the good news is that it's more direct than those of "Travelling Through the Dark" and "Lagoons, Hanlan's Point." In other words, the poet comes closer to stating it explicitly. You should be able to understand the comparison that is maintained throughout this poem.



Now read "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by the famous Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. When you've read the poem, continue this lesson.



Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

1

The poem you've just read has stirred readers and listeners for several generations now. It's very likely one of the best-known modern poems written in English. How did you feel when you read "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"? What did the poem make you think of? What images struck you as particularly vivid?

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to questions 5 through 8.

¹ Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," in *Collected Poems* (London: David Higham Associates, 1952). Reproduced by permission.

GOING FURTHER

If you do an Internet search under “Dylan Thomas” or “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night,” you’ll come up with many sites. Some of them will even allow you to listen to Thomas himself reading his poem (in his day, Thomas was as well-known for his poetry readings as for the works themselves).

If you have the requisite software on your computer, see if you can find a site offering Thomas’s own recording. If it’s still up and running when you take this course, this site should do the trick:

<http://www.poets.org/poems/poems.cfm?prmID=1159>



Use a controlling metaphor to write a poem of your own. Here’s an idea one student used: He compared his life to a garden. It contains strong growing plants, and though storms might blow through, tearing up leaves and scattering flowers, the roots and stems remain healthy.

Ineffective Figurative Language: The Cliché

Before wrapping up this lesson, you should be aware of overusing figurative language in your own writing. A **cliché** (pronounced “klee-shay,” in case the term is new to you) is an expression that was once colourful and expressive but which is now boring because of overuse. Many clichés are metaphors. These metaphors were, no doubt, highly imaginative when they were created, though they no longer have the same effect.



cliché

an overused
expression

If you use a cliché, it will likely not be as effective as something more original. For example, if you say that your homework caused you to “burn the midnight oil,” people will probably know that you mean you worked late, but otherwise the phrase is largely meaningless since people don’t relate to oil lamps as much as they do to electric light. Perhaps modernizing the phrase would help: “I kept the power metre working overtime.”

Part of the problem with clichés is that they've been used so widely that they've become part of ordinary speech and no longer bring to mind the vivid images they once did. They serve a purpose in conversation, when people don't have much time to think, but when you write, you should try to be more original and interesting.

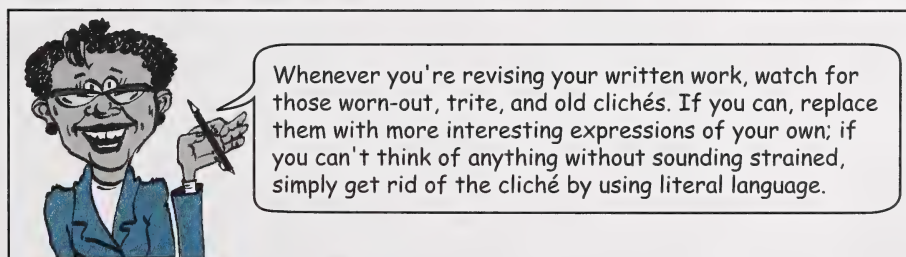
How do you replace those old familiar and comfortable clichés? You use your imagination and writing skills to invent a new, more effective way of communicating your thoughts.

2. Following are a few clichés—all metaphors or similes. Rewrite each sentence so as to eliminate the cliché.
 - a. When I lost my brother's keys, I thought he'd **fly off the handle**.
 - b. My boss **hauled me over the coals** over that goof in my report.
 - c. That problem was **nipped in the bud**.
 - d. The bed was **tight as a drum** when I'd finished making it.
 - e. His behaviour was like that of **a bull in a china shop**.
 - f. She was **chomping at the bit** to get shopping.
 - g. When you write, **avoid** clichés **like the plague**.
3. Imagine a party. Two guests are engaged in a conversation. Guest I is rather long-winded, and her speech is full of clichés. Read her monologue; then write an equally cliché-ridden speech for Guest II. Have some fun; make it as awful as you can.

GUEST I: So anyway, it was raining cats and dogs when I got there, but as they say, any port in a storm. So in I went, none the worse for wear, and who do I find there but my better half! Aha! I thought. The plot thickens! I decided to have it out with him then and there, but that sort of thing's easier said than done.

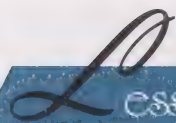
Well, to make a long story short, he backed down and beat a hasty retreat. I think it's safe to say that when he got back to our home sweet home he was a sadder but wiser man.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 2 on page 113.



If you have access to the Internet, do a search for *clichés* sites. You'll be surprised at how many there are—and you just might have some fun.





Lesson 3: A Metaphor on a Larger Scale

Plays and Metaphors



You probably think of poetry when you think of metaphor, but remember that poets are not the only ones who try to use language to achieve the greatest effect; short-story writers, playwrights, novelists, and non-fiction writers do this as well. And so can you when you write.

script

a story, consisting of dialogue and stage directions, written to be performed as a play, film, television show, or radio production

stage directions

the information given in a script, usually written in italics, to help readers visualize what is happening and to show actors and directors how to perform the work

In this lesson, you'll be reading a short play, *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor*, by Canadian writer Hugh Garner, in which a controlling metaphor is used extensively. When you read the play, consider the implications of the journey Mrs. Taylor undertakes. If the journey is a metaphor about her life or about her as an individual, what does the playwright want to tell us?

Before you start reading, consider the format a playwright uses: the **script**. Reading a script is like reading a recipe or manual. You need to be able to visualize as you read, to see and hear the characters as they develop in your mind; to feel the setting and how it influences the characters; and to predict how the situation is going to turn out. All this goes on in your mind. This is similar to following a recipe for chocolate-layer cake or instructions for assembling a gas barbecue; you know what it will be like because you can see it in your mind so clearly.

Often much can be learned about the characters and setting of a play from the opening **stage directions**.

Turn to the Readings section of the Appendix and read the opening stage directions of Scene 1 for *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor*. Then answer the question that follows.



1. a. Basing your response entirely on the opening stage directions for Scene 1, describe the sort of person you think Mrs. Taylor to be. What is her life probably like? Give reasons for your ideas.
- b. Draw a picture of Mrs. Taylor as you see her. The playwright provides a good general description of her as she sits in her room, but with some imagination you should be able to bring her to life even more fully.



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 113.

playwrights

people who write plays

Writing a play is rather different from writing other sorts of fiction, and those who read a script must be very alert to the clues **playwrights** include in the characters' lines about the sort of people they are. As a reader, you must ask, for instance, how the characters would sound. Is a character firm and determined in his or her speech, or is the character weak and shy?

When you read a script, you often must determine what the characters are like for yourself because the playwright might not tell you. As you read, try to imagine how Mrs. Taylor would speak; try, even, to imagine the sound of her voice. It would be good to record yourself reading the play out loud and then listen to the recording as you read the play again; you may find that you've been reading a character incorrectly. If you can, get a study partner, friend, or family member to read the other roles while you read Mrs. Taylor's part. Better yet, round up several people to play the various parts.

A script isn't written for silent reading; it's a basis for a dramatic presentation and is meant to be acted out. That's why you must be an active reader when you read a script.

2. Imagine for a moment that you're a playwright. How is writing a script different from writing short stories or novels?

In the chart that follows, several aspects of short-story (or novel) writing are presented. Construct a similar chart and for each point suggest how a playwright would deal with similar issues.

Story Writer/Novelist	Playwright
• can tell readers directly what characters think and feel	
• can use many settings	
• can change settings easily	
• can move characters from place to place easily	

Compare your chart with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 113.

Next, you're going to read *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor*. It's important to read the play twice, once for literal comprehension and then again for a better understanding of the play as a metaphor. Respond to the following journal suggestion as you work your way through the play the first time.

As you read *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor*, keep a set of notes and put them in your journal. In these notes, express your personal responses to what is said, done, and implied in the play. Try to determine what each of these reveals about the characters, their situation, and their relationships.

Feel free to express your ideas on any aspect of the play that interests you. Here are several sample questions from the play's first few pages to which you can respond if you're having trouble getting started:

- What have I learned about Mrs. Taylor so far?
- Is there anyone I know who reminds me of Mrs. Taylor? In what ways?
- What must it be like to live in Mrs. Taylor's flat?
- What sort of relationship does Mrs. Taylor have with the landlady?

Don't feel you have to answer all, or any, of these questions. They're provided only to get you going on your own personal responses.



Now turn once again to the Readings section of the Appendix and read *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor*. For the time being, read it only once, and remember to keep some notes in your journal. In case it's been a while since you worked with a play script, here are a few more drama-related terms that should refresh your memory. They won't all necessarily apply to the work you'll be doing with this short play, but you'll need to know them for future drama studies in this course.

acts: major divisions within a long play

backdrop: a large painted cloth hung at the back of the stage to represent a scene or location

costumes: the clothes worn by actors

lighting: the lights used in a dramatic production to increase the visibility of the actors and create mood and atmosphere

props (or properties): objects used by actors during a play: for example, tables, pens, umbrellas, and TV sets



scenes: divisions within acts of a play

set: the scenery used on a stage; for example, walls between rooms, a staircase, or a door leading to an unseen room on the side

sound effects: the sounds created for effects during a play; for example, gunfire or thunder

stagehands: members of a theatre company who move props, operate the lighting, and generally take care of details behind the scenes during a play

structure: the way a play is put together



Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to question 9.

Now reread *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor* a second time, this time concentrating on the metaphorical quality of the play.

With this in mind, events and comments take on new significance. What, for example, is the significance of Mrs. Taylor taking along her Bible? What are readers to infer from the contrast between the young mother who says she'll ". . . be glad to see this day go" and Mrs. Taylor, who is enjoying the trip so much? Is it meaningful that the young woman has a "ribbon" of tickets while Mrs. Taylor has only one?

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to question 10.

GOING FURTHER

Hugh Garner also wrote *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor* as a short story. If you can find a copy of it (a librarian should be able to help you), you might find it interesting to compare the story with the play. This should provide you with a better understanding of the differences between the two genres—the play and the short story.

Working with Plays and Scripts

The Script

Do you enjoy reading plays? Some people love working with scripts, while others prefer prose fiction—like short stories and novels. Of course, a play is meant to be watched, not read, but active readers should be able to bring a script to life in their minds. A script for a play, as you've seen, does several things.

- It presents a list of the characters appearing in the play, which may include a brief description of their appearance and possibly their personalities.
- It has a description of the set and sometimes contains a diagram of how the stage should be set up.
- It provides dialogue.
- It offers stage directions to the director and actors in areas like vocal expression, facial expressions, body language, and movement on the stage.



Turn back to *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor*, and read the first few pages again. Pay close attention to the format and stage directions. For instance, note the convention of using upper-case letters to indicate the characters speaking and the placement of stage directions in italics and parentheses.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to question 11.

I noticed one thing that was interesting about the stage directions in this play. In Scene 3, on the train, the directions say, "Curtain falls momentarily to indicate the passage of time." I guess that's sort of a visual transitional device, isn't it—like the ones we were looking at for writing in Section 1?

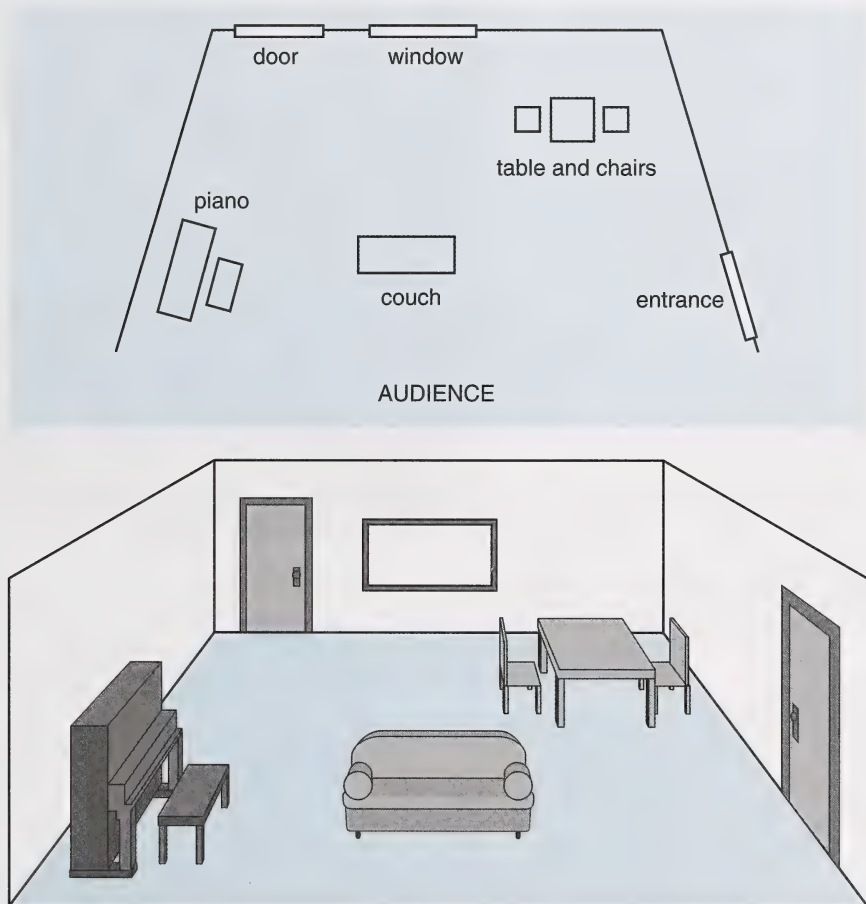
That's an excellent observation. That lowering of the curtain makes for a smooth transition between an early scene on the train and one later on. It helps viewers understand the connection between scenes.

3. Chances are that you're more familiar with transitional devices used on television shows than in staged plays. Suggest a few methods TV-show writers use to make a transition from place to place or from one time to another.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 114.

The Set

Hugh Garner describes the sets of his scenes quite fully, but nowhere in the script will you find a diagram of the set design. Sometimes diagrams of this sort are included in scripts to help directors and set designers visualize what the stage should look like. For example, here's one set-design diagram you might find in the script for a play. Below it is an artist's rendition of what this design might look like after the set designers have done their job. Note that this isn't a set design for *A Trip for Mrs. Taylor*.



Now open Assignment Booklet 2A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to question 12.

Of course, there's a lot more to understanding—and producing—a play than this lesson has discussed, but you've made a start. You'll be thinking more about drama in Module 4.

Conclusion



In this section, you've focused on the metaphor of life as a journey. In thinking metaphorically, you've focused on the importance of various types of figurative language in effectively communicating thoughts and feelings. Figurative language occurs not only in poetry but in all forms of literature.

The metaphor is of particular importance because it's such an effective method of communicating or enhancing ideas. Sometimes a reader has to be particularly sharp to find and understand a metaphor in a literary work; but once this metaphor is discovered and understood, the reader gains new levels of insight into the literature.

In the next section, you'll shift your focus from the journey of life in general to the unusual encounters that can occur at any time during that journey.

Turn to Assignment Booklet 2A, and complete the remaining question for this section.

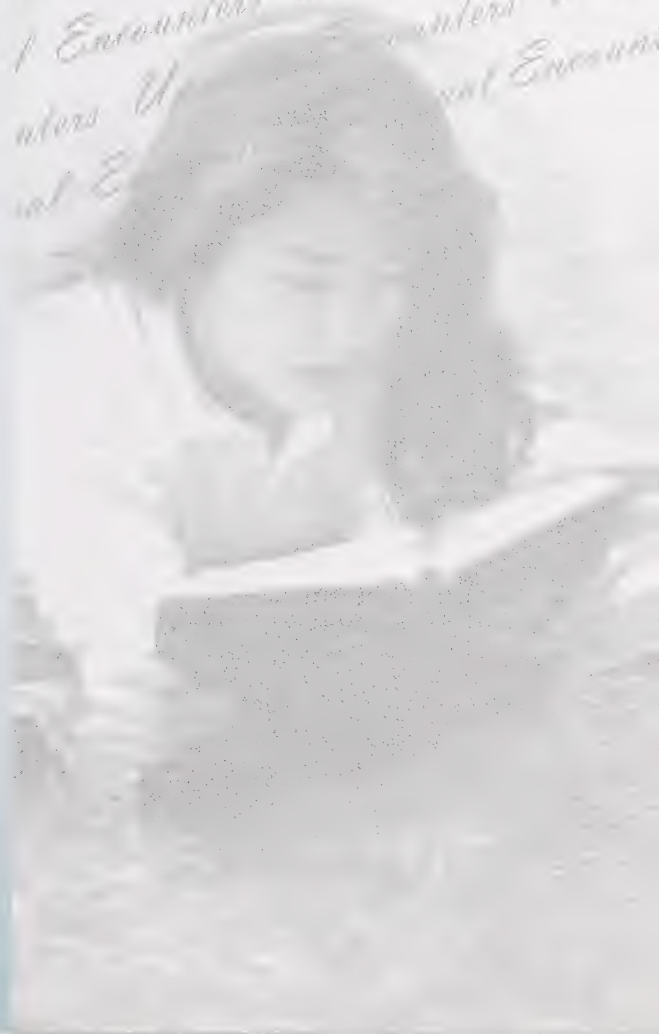
Section 3: Unusual Encounters

In this section you'll be reading some short stories dealing with rather unusual occurrences. If you were to write a short story about an unusual incident, how would you describe it? How would you introduce people and places? Would your story simply relate the logical order of events as they occur, or would you tell your tale in a less conventional way—perhaps by presenting the ending first?

Good short-story writers are interested not only in telling a story, but also in telling it well. They want their stories to affect their readers; they want to evoke a response. When you read the stories in this section, pay attention to your reactions! If a good writer's story is read by a good reader, a reaction should occur.

The first part of this section is intended principally to help you extend your understanding of the short story. When you've finished the section, you should be able to explain irony, implications, and experimentation as they occur in literature. Later in the section, you'll be working on your critical skills along with your essay-writing techniques.

Unusual Encounters Unusual Encounters Unusual Encounters Unusual Encounters Unusual Encounters





Lesson 1: Irony and Satire

Irony at Work



Irony can occur at the beach: if you drove to a local lake to enjoy the sand and sunshine, it would be ironic if you came home with a painful sunburn. It would also be ironic if you came home cold and wet from a rainstorm.

The irony in each case is that pleasure was your purpose in going, but pain was the result. Irony is just this—a contrast between what happens (or what is said) and what was expected.

Irony can also occur in literature. You've already seen it at work in some of the literature you've read for this course. "Cowboys and Indians" is an excellent example of a highly ironic work. So is the poem "The Man He Killed."

Normally, three different types of literary irony can be distinguished; the following is an analysis of the differences between them.

Irony of Situation

What happens to a character might be very different from what the audience expected to happen or what the audience thought appropriate to happen. This is called *irony of situation* or **situational irony**, and it's probably the most important example of irony in literature. In this case, something happens that's a surprise to both reader (or viewer) and one or more characters. If a character, for example, struggles hard to reach a goal, only to find once it's been achieved (and to the surprise of the audience) that it won't bring happiness at all, situational irony has occurred.



situational irony

a form of irony in which what happens differs from what was expected by both the audience and characters in a piece of literature

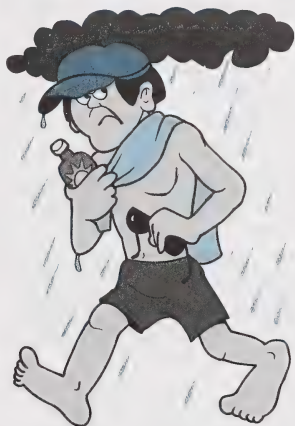
Dramatic Irony

Dramatic irony can occur when a character is unaware of a certain situation, though the audience does know about it. So if you know more than a character does about what's going on, and you see the mistakes the character is making, this is dramatic irony at work. The ironic contrast here is between what a character thinks is the case and what you, the audience, know to be true. In the story "You Should Have Seen the Mess," for example, there's dramatic irony in that the reader realizes the shallowness of the narrator who feels superior to almost everybody.

dramatic irony

a form of irony in which there is a difference between what the audience knows and what a character believes to be true

Verbal Irony



Verbal irony occurs in everyday speech when your intention is quite different from what your words actually mean. For example, you might be observing a raging snowstorm and say, "Nice day!" In reality, you mean exactly the opposite of what you said. Why would you say, "Nice day!" in referring to a day of horrible weather? You'd say it because your listener would understand what you mean, and the way you expressed your meaning would create more impact than if you had merely said, "Terrible weather, isn't it?"

Whenever you call a very tall friend "Shorty," whenever you say, "Oh great!" when something goes wrong, and whenever you say, "Nice day" when it's miserable out, you're using verbal irony. Verbal irony occurs in literature, too, but it's perhaps the least important of the three types that have been distinguished. It's used largely to develop the personalities of certain characters. A character in a movie or a story may, perhaps, have a habit of making ironic remarks.

verbal irony

a form of irony in which the implicit meaning of a speaker differs from the explicitly stated message

1. Test your ability to distinguish among these three types of irony. Label each of the following as verbal, dramatic, or situational irony.
 - a. "Nice play," Maurice yelled out as Roberto fumbled the ball.
 - b. In "Cowboys and Indians" the Crows pretended to be incompetent at movie making, only to be paid more for the extra time they took.
 - c. In "Red Dress—1946," just when the narrator had cast her lot with Mary Fortune because she felt she would never be popular with boys or the "popular" crowd, she was "saved" from her decision when an ordinary looking boy worked up the courage to ask her to dance.
2. Following are three cases in which situational irony could be used to provide unexpected endings. Suggest an ironic outcome or unexpected twist for each event.
 - a. A young man spends all his money on a dream car to find that . . .
 - b. A woman's fear of flying causes her to take a bus instead, and . . .
 - c. You wait for weeks for a special social event, but on the day of the event . . .

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 1 on page 114.

Can means of communication that don't involve words or print be ironic? I've often heard my dad say that his favourite political cartoonist has a wonderful sense of irony. 	Absolutely. All visual artists can reveal a sense of irony in their works. Imagine, for example, that a painter with environmental concerns produced a work showing a bleak, devastated planet that would no longer support life and called it, perhaps, "Nature's Glories—2050." That would be ironic. But certainly cartoonists are in one of the best situations to produce visually ironic works. You'll be seeing an example of this shortly. 
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If you'd like to find out more about irony, refer to the *English Language Arts 20-1 Multimedia Segments* CD-ROM and watch the segment titled "Irony in Print and Non-Print Texts."

Irony is used in the short story “An Astrologer’s Day” by the highly respected Indian writer R. K. Narayan. This story, set in India, is about an astrologer who has quite an unusual day.

Turn to the Readings section of the Appendix now and locate “An Astrologer’s Day.” This story turns on an ironic situation. As a change of pace, begin by reading only the **first three paragraphs** of the story; then respond to the questions that follow.

3. Describe the atmosphere—or feeling—created by that lengthy first paragraph of the story. Explain, with references to the story, how the writer created this atmosphere.
4. Do you have any ideas at this point about what is going to happen in the remainder of this story? Think carefully about what you’ve read, jot down your predictions, and see how accurate you were later.



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3; Lesson 1 on page 114.

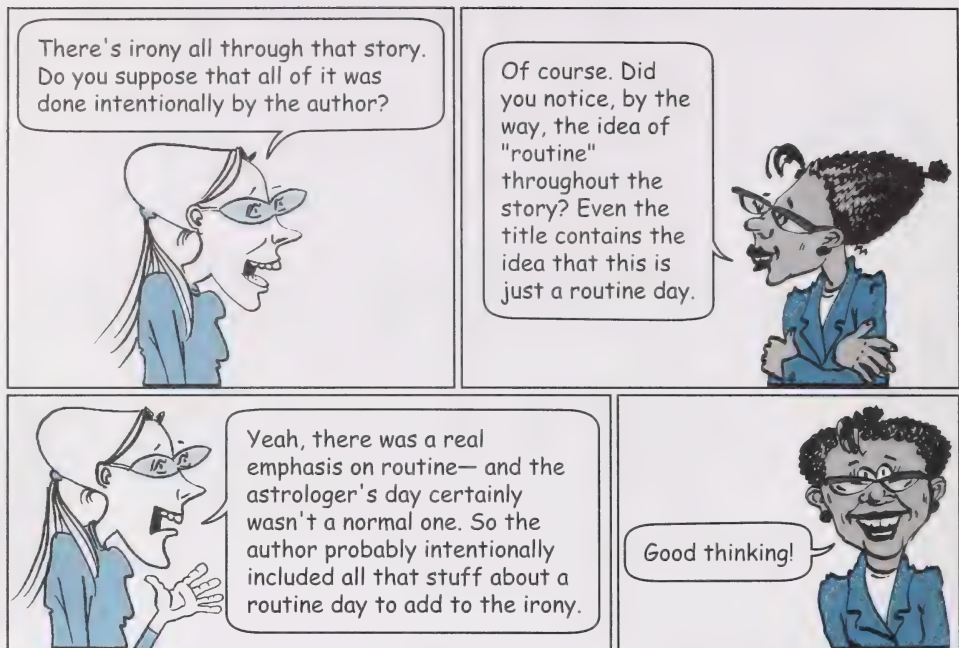
Now continue reading the story. Pay close attention to the ending. When you’ve finished, continue with the material that follows.

5. How accurate did your prediction turn out to be? If you were close, explain what alerted you to the direction the story would take. If you weren’t, suggest what you might do another time to improve your predicting powers.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3; Lesson 1 on page 114.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to questions 1 to 3.

Did you enjoy “An Astrologer’s Day”? How did you react to the irony and the tone of the story? Did you enjoy the exotic feel of the Far East created by the writer? Were you satisfied with the story’s ending? Address questions like these in a personal response to “An Astrologer’s Day.”



"An Astrologer's Day" is a very succinct short story. The size of the short story places limitations on what the writer can do; it isn't easy to tell a good story in only a few pages. When you read "A Trip for Mrs. Taylor," you thought about the fact that writing for the stage presents the playwright with limitations in areas such as setting, character movement, and even the scenes that can be performed before an audience. Similarly, the short story has limitations related to its relatively brief length.

6. Thinking about "An Astrologer's Day," explain how a short story can be limited in the following areas. The first has been done as an example.
 - a. Setting: *There isn't enough room for a writer to do justice to more than one or two settings in a short story.*
 - b. Character:
 - c. Plot:
 - d. Theme:
7. a. Think back to a movie you may have seen recently. Explain whether it would or would not be possible to convert the film into a short story. Be sure to give your reasons.

- b. Can you see any potential for expanding “An Astrologer’s Day” into a novel? Why or why not?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 1 on page 115.

Satire

satire

in literature, the ridiculing of human vice or stupidity

hyperbole

the use of exaggeration to produce a serious or humorous effect

caricature

a deliberate satirical exaggeration of a person’s characteristics

Closely related to irony in literature is **satire**. Satire is the ridiculing of human vice or stupidity. Satirists are writers who write with this purpose in mind—to point out through ridicule some human vice or folly that they feel needs correcting. Satire is by nature critical; it involves a judgment about people’s behaviour or thinking and a desire to bring about change in that behaviour or thinking.



Satirists use a variety of techniques for pointing out human frailties. The chief tool of the satirist, however, is irony. Others are exaggeration (or **hyperbole**) and **caricature**.

A famous example might make clear how all this works. In 1729 Jonathan Swift, an Irish satirist, wrote an essay known as *A Modest Proposal* (the complete title takes three lines) that is still used today as a model of a satirical essay.

Swift was upset by the vast difference in living standards between the rich and poor in Ireland and the indifference with which the wealthy regarded the suffering of the destitute. He suggested in a seemingly serious manner that a way to overcome this situation would be for the poor to sell their babies to the rich for food. This, he suggested, would solve several problems: it would give the poor a new source of income, it would cut down drastically on the numbers of people living in poverty, and it would have the added benefit of varying the diets of the rich.

Like any good satirist, Swift wrote his work “with a straight face.” He set up his essay like any scholarly work and published it, expecting his readers to be wise enough (that is, to be active readers) to see the ironic aspect of his suggestions. Unfortunately, most of his readers weren’t shrewd enough, and Swift’s essay horrified many of his contemporaries. Fortunately, those who did understand the satire were jolted into a greater awareness of the mistreatment of the poor in Ireland. The wealthy, it was implied, were treating the poor so callously that they might as well go all the way and use them as livestock raised for food.

You should be able to see how satire works from that example. Swift’s whole essay was written meaning just the opposite of what he said. There’s the ironic element. The hyperbole is equally clear: by exaggerating the inhuman way the rich treated the poor, Swift made people think about social relationships in a way they hadn’t done before. And his caricature of the rich as people willing to cannibalize their less fortunate fellow creatures is all part of the essay’s exaggeration.



Swift, by the way, was also the author of a work you've likely heard of: *Gulliver's Travels*. Though often thought of today as a children's fantasy tale, *Gulliver's Travels* was another masterpiece of satire, ridiculing many things Swift felt were wrong with his society—including the absurdly pompous and egotistical behaviour of Europe's royalty.



If you have access to the Internet, use either “Jonathan Swift” or “A Modest Proposal” as search terms with your favourite search engine. Chances are you'll discover Swift's entire essay online and you'll be able to relish the tongue-in-cheek writing of this famous eighteenth-century satirist.

editorial cartoon

a cartoon that satirizes public figures and current situations

There have been many satirical writers since Swift, though today one of the most widespread forms of satire is the political cartoon. People who create **editorial cartoons** rely heavily on satire to lampoon what they see as corruption, double standards, and dishonesty in society. In fact, when you think of caricature, you likely think of a visual representation of someone that exaggerates his or her physical features. The drawing on the right is an example you may recognize.



Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 4.

GOING FURTHER

If you have an artistic flare, try your hand at satirical cartooning. You could start with a caricature of someone well-known, or you could brainstorm for cartoon ideas and jump in with both feet. Try to publish your cartoon; at the very least, share it with friends or family members. If you think it's really good, submit it to your school newsletter for publishing.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 5.

In this lesson, you've thought about irony and satire as tools of the writer's trade. In the next lesson, you'll be looking at other, more extreme, steps writers can take to challenge and intrigue their audiences.

Lesson 2: The Short Story—Extending Your Understanding



Traditionally, short stories have tended to follow patterns that were commonplace and easily recognized and understood. No doubt in past English language arts courses you've studied plot diagrams of standard stories, and you've followed plot lines from initial incident to conclusion.

In recent years, however, many writers have tired of writing straightforward stories about ordinary people in predictable situations. Such writers have begun to experiment with new types of stories told in unusual—or experimental—ways.

Sometimes the results of this sort of experiment are just slightly different from rank-and-file storytelling; sometimes they're so unusual that many readers have trouble knowing what to make of them.

The story you're about to read is very unusual. You may find it rather difficult to understand because it seems to take place in an unreal world. This type of setting is said to be **surreal**, a term meaning that the setting is unreal and dream-like (ironically, the word was invented from the expression "super real").

surreal

unreal; dream-like

If you've studied the visual arts, the term *surreal* probably won't be new to you. Surrealist artists have produced startlingly effective paintings by combining and juxtaposing (putting side-by-side) unusual and unexpected images.



Surreal Suggestion 37

If you can, find reproductions of surrealist paintings (your librarian should be able to help you). A few famous surrealist artists to look for are Salvador Dalí (perhaps the artist most people associate with the expression *surrealist*), André Masson, René Magritte, and Max Ernst. Try to describe the effects one or more of these paintings has on you. Why do you suppose the artist(s) chose to paint in this style?



If you have access to the Internet, a search for any one of these artists should turn up copies of their paintings. Of course, you won't get anything like the resolution you would with good reproductions in art books, but it might be interesting nonetheless.



Turn now to the Readings section of the Appendix and read “The Late Man” by the Canadian (though German-born) writer Andreas Schroeder. Don’t worry if some parts do not make perfect sense to you in this story, but do keep in mind that a writer always writes with a purpose. Keep asking yourself what the author might be saying about our society and the way we behave toward others. As you read, jot down any questions you have about the story. When you’ve finished the story, continue this lesson.

1. Think about what you know of surrealist visual art. If possible, examine reproductions of a few surrealist paintings. At the very least, look at the graphic appearing at the beginning of this lesson. Bearing all this in mind, explain why “The Late Man” can be called *surrealist*.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 2 on page 115.



Mrs. Davonne: “The Late Man” seems to be a social commentary—a story that’s meant to reveal problems in our society and our behaviour toward others. Has anybody got any ideas on what the author might be trying to tell us?

Kai: I’m not sure, but I think it has something to do with uniformity and difference. I mean, this one guy began to do things differently and only one person would have anything to do with him.

Tashi: Yeah, that whole village was so locked into a routine. Everything was done at just the same time every day. Then this one guy begins to act odd—by their standards—and look what happened to him.

Mrs. Davonne: Good points. And did you notice that no one in the story has a name? Even the main character is just “the late man.” Do you think that might be significant?

Kai: I don’t know, but it sort of seems to me as if we’re all really the same, maybe. There are only very small differences, yet they were enough to cause the man’s destruction.

Mrs. Davonne: Good idea. Wasn't it because of his slight difference that almost no one helped the man when he needed help? Do you think the writer might have wanted us to realize that people are afraid of things that are a little unusual—and that it's fear that keeps us from helping?

Anita: Yeah, but the village didn't solve anything by ignoring the man. I mean, he may be dead, but now there's another guy who's seeing things differently.

Mrs. Davonne: That's right. You can't make things disappear by simply closing your eyes to them.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 6.



If you can, discuss your own thoughts on “The Late Man” with your study partner. If you're in a classroom situation, participate in a group discussion. Be willing to modify your own initial responses as you hear other people's ideas; but remember that your own thoughts are as valuable as anybody's. See if you can reach some kind of a consensus about the message of the story.

1. Like a surrealist work of art, “The Late Man” is something to which people respond emotionally. You may dislike the story. You may find its switching between past and present tense irritating, its message confusing, and its point obscure. On the other hand, you may have found it a refreshing change from the kinds of stories that you've been reading.

In a paragraph or two describe your thoughts and feelings on “The Late Man.” Be honest, but be fair.

2. Many people dislike stories with **indeterminate endings**—unsolved endings that imply that the conflict may not be over. “The Late Man” has such an indeterminate ending; it finishes on the note that there's now another “late man.”

If you don't like the ending of “The Late Man,” try rewriting the ending. First decide at what point you should make changes and whether the results of your efforts should be ironic. Then write your ending.

Indeterminate ending

an ending to a story that seems unclear as to which way events will go

While you may never have encountered a surreal story like “The Late Man” before, there’s a better chance that you’ve seen movies with a strong surrealist element. These days more and more writers, producers, and directors are experimenting with traditional structures of film—especially time sequences. It’s not at all unusual to see films that jump back and forth in time with only the barest signs of transitions taking place. Films of this sort expect a great deal more of their viewers than traditional movies do. They take the idea of “active viewing” to an extreme.

2. Have you watched any movies with surrealist elements? If so, identify them and explain their surrealist elements. What do you think of films of this sort? Do you enjoy them? Are they challenging or frustrating? Will you make an effort to see more?

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 2 on page 115.

In Lesson 2, you’ve read a modern, surrealist short story. You’ve also realized that in order to grasp what the writer is communicating, it’s necessary to read actively and critically. This is a skill you’ll be working on in the material that follows.

Lesson 3: Supporting Your Ideas

Did you enjoy thinking about and discussing “The Late Man”? Stories like this can clearly generate a good deal of discussion—and disagreement. In fact, both stories you’ve read in this section were written with a certain audience in mind; the writers clearly expected fairly sophisticated, active readers to be reading their stories. If writers produce works for a less sophisticated audience—younger readers, for example—they should ensure that the ideas they wish to communicate, the vocabulary they use, and the ways in which they structure their writing are appropriate.

Reading stories like the ones in this section has placed demands on you; you have to read each paragraph carefully, noting vocabulary you might not feel certain about and working to pick up on certain **implications** contained in the stories.

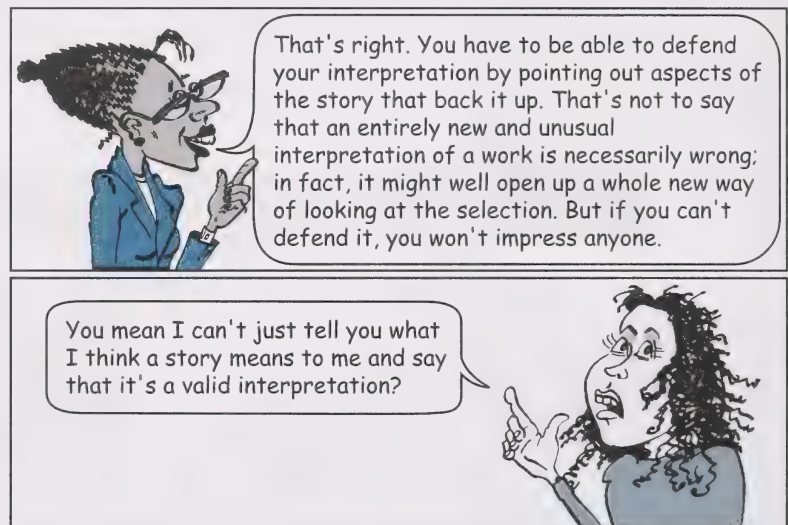


implication

an indirect
suggestion or hint

What happens, though, when your interpretation of a story (your understanding of what the writer is saying) differs from those of other people? As you've seen, this can be a positive situation; it can lead to discussion that eventually allows everyone involved to enrich his or her understanding. Sometimes, however, students make the mistake of thinking that whenever a work of literature—or any text or work that communicates ideas—is involved, everyone's interpretation is equally valid. This misconception is especially prevalent when it comes to surrealist writing like "The Late Man."

At first glance, this misconception may seem to make sense. After all, we filter what we read through our own experiences and perceptions; so, naturally, we all have different impressions of the texts we encounter. This doesn't mean, though, that everyone's interpretation of a work of literature is equally valid. Your interpretation is valid only to the degree that you can support it. You can do this by quoting or pointing out supporting details. And if there are other details that clearly contradict your interpretation, you certainly can't ignore them.



You may choose to support your interpretation of a story by quoting, either directly or indirectly. Here's one example of an argument using a direct quotation:

The astrologer did a thriving business, as is shown when the writer says, "People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks."

Now here's the same argument using an indirect quotation:

The astrologer, we are told, attracted people as flowers attract bees.



Whenever you quote directly, be sure to copy the wording and punctuation exactly and follow the proper rules for presenting quotations. You can find these in your *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*.

Conversely, never put quotation marks around an indirect quotation. If the wording isn't exact, it's not a direct quotation.

cite

quote or refer to as
an example

1. The following questions about stories you've read in this section will allow you to search for and **cite** evidence for implications that readers might make when reading the stories.

You should use quotation marks if you quote directly. If you feel there's no evidence to support a given implication, just say that no evidence exists.

- a. Show that the astrologer in "An Astrologer's Day" has not become a rich man.
- b. Show that the astrologer's old enemy will pursue him no longer.
- c. By referring to "The Late Man," demonstrate that the story's message applies to all people.
- d. Prove that "the late man" was more an obsessed man than he was a satisfied one.
- e. Show that conformity (doing as others do) can be a positive thing according to "The Late Man."

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 3 on page 116.



One thing to remember when citing from other sources is that longer passages are treated differently from shorter ones. If you want to quote a passage of five lines or more, don't put it in quotation marks; rather, set it off in a separate paragraph and indent the margins on either side. You might also want to reduce the point size slightly for that paragraph. See pages 131 and 132 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students* for an example.

An Eye on Quotation Marks



Did you have trouble dealing with the mechanical aspects of quotation marks in Question 1? If so, you should refer to pages 23 and 24 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*. After that, test yourself by correctly answering Question 2.

2. Punctuate and capitalize the following sentences correctly. Refer to your handbook if necessary. If there are issues that you can't sort out with the help of the handbook, be sure to consult with your teacher.
- a. Hi said Alphonse as he stepped out of the car.
How are you
 - b. Miranda wondered aloud how she would ever
meet all her clients that day
 - c. Are you the person who yelled get me out of here
asked Kirsten
 - d. And if I ever see you around here again he added
pointing his finger at me you'll regret it.
 - e. Smiling, she asked and just who would you be
 - f. Hey, get off that lawn shouted Mr. Seymour
 - g. This added Lorette is the nicest thing anyone ever did for me



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 3 on page 116.

In this short lesson, you've thought about defending your interpretations of works of literature by citing directly from those works. This serves as a lead into the final topic of this section: writing critical essays (which is what you'll be exploring in Lessons 4 and 5).



Lesson 4: Critical Thinking



Have you ever given a friend something to read—perhaps something you’ve read and liked, or perhaps something you’d written yourself—and been disappointed when the reaction was “Very nice. What’s on TV tonight?” When you hear a comment like this, you know the speaker hasn’t been a critical reader. On the other hand, if the response is “This is good stuff; I especially like that ironic twist at the end,” you know that your friend has read critically.

Most people have the ability to read, listen, view, and think critically, but they don’t always use it. As with any ability, the more you use it, the more it develops. In this lesson, you’ll get the chance to sharpen your critical skills. You should, by the section’s end, be able to demonstrate good critical reading and thinking skills. You should also be able to write a critical, or analytical, essay. This is a skill that will be very important when you take English Language Arts 30-1, so it’s a good idea to lay the groundwork ahead of time.

What Is Criticism?

When you think of the word *criticism* you probably think of it as something negative. To criticize someone or something is usually to point out its flaws. A highly critical person is one who seldom sees the good side of anything.

But though we often use the word *criticism* this way, this isn't its only use. Essentially, to criticize is just to offer an opinion. When you hear the word *critic*, think of a movie or concert reviewer. This type of critic offers an opinion on the quality of a movie or concert. You, in turn, read—or listen to—the work of such critics to see how they liked a concert or to find out whether or not you should see a certain movie.



critique

a critical appraisal

You've probably seen a good number of movie reviews (or **critiques**) on television. The reviewers may have their own shows, or they may come on at the end of a newscast to review a recently released film. Often at the end of their critiques, movie reviewers give a film a rating—perhaps three stars out of a possible five or a simple thumbs-up. You'll be looking at film reviews more closely in Module 6.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 7.



If you weren't sure about how to express your thoughts while doing your movie review, make a point of watching one or more reviews on television. Reviewers all have their own styles, but they usually follow similar formats.

Reviewing an entire movie or play—or any other piece of literature—in a two-minute slot isn't easy, is it? In writing a literary criticism (or critique), it is always important to have a clear idea of exactly which aspect of a literary work it is you wish to criticize. If, for instance, you were to offer criticism on a novel, you certainly couldn't do it justice in just a few hundred words; but you could focus on one specific aspect of the novel to provide an adequate criticism. You'll be thinking more about focusing your work throughout the rest of this module.

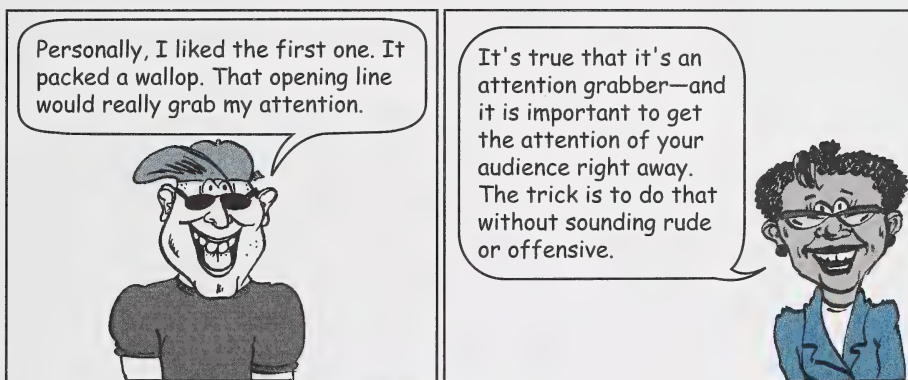
How Should a Critique Sound?

When producing their critiques, reviewers must sound like reasonable people if an audience is to accept what they say. Therefore, if you offer a criticism, your tone should be quite mature, polished, and reasoned if you want to sound credible. If you sound serious about what you're doing, your audience is more likely to take you seriously.

Here are two openings of movie reviews. Note the different tones.

- This movie is reeking garbage and only a brainless person could ever enjoy it!
- This movie would be of interest only to viewers who don't mind an absence of plot, acting ability, or good camera work.

See the difference? Both reviews are equally scathing, but the second one is easier to accept. It's well written and much less emotional.



Improve the following critical statements by rewriting them in a more polished and reasonable tone.

1. Too bad the writer had no idea how people sound when they talk.
2. Nothing rhymes in this poem; and there's no rhythm or any kind of pattern, which might have helped!

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 116.

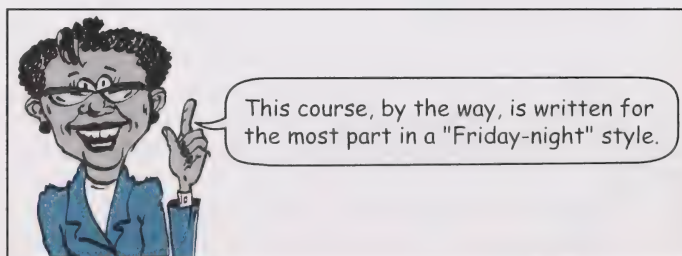
Students sometimes have trouble tailoring the type of language they use to the different audiences and purposes for which they write. This was covered in Module 1, Section 3, where the differences between formal and informal language were discussed. While it's often convenient to speak as though there were two, clear-cut ways of writing and speaking, the reality is that everyone uses a broad spectrum of writing styles: from an everyday, slangy, colloquial style at one extreme to a highly controlled, polished, and mature style at the other.

The chart that follows shows one way to think about the continuum of written language styles. The chart itself is a metaphor; it implicitly compares language styles to clothing/behaviour patterns people often associate with days of the week. Perhaps you'll find this approach to clarifying common styles used in writing helpful. Note that the chart itself is written in an informal style; it avoids the usual formal labels you might have been expecting.

Written Language Styles

	Saturday	Monday Morning	Friday Night	Grad Night
Characteristics	easy, open, honest, informal, slangy	neat, clear, clean, precise	semi-formal, carefully groomed, thoughtful, well prepared	formal, meticulous, sophisticated, poised—but never stiff and unnatural
Possible Audiences	close friends	people who are at ease with you and your ideas	people you don't know well but whom you'd like to interest in your ideas	people you don't necessarily know but whom you'd like to convince of the rightness and logic of your position
Examples of Use	• a note to a friend • dialogue in a play, movie, short story, or poem	• a journal, writing folder, or regular assignment • a personal essay	• some persuasive or analytical (critical) essays • a school newspaper article • a letter to the editor	• some persuasive or analytical essays • some critiques • a research paper • a formal, analytical work • an entrance test for university • a job application or business letter

Everyone has access to each of these styles. You may feel that one style is more comfortable than another for you, but always bear in mind your purpose and audience. Using the wrong style for a writing activity is as noticeable as wearing the wrong clothes for a particular occasion.



When you wrote your movie critique for Question 1, chances are you used something close to a “Friday-night” style—or possibly even a “Monday-morning” style. When you write more serious literary criticism, or present it orally, you should use a “grad-night” tone.

In other words, you should use a style that’s mature, confident, and polished. Be sure to follow grammar rules and avoid slang. The real trick, though, is to do this without sounding stiff and unnatural.

The form with which you’ll be working throughout the next lesson is that of the **critical**, or **analytical**, **essay**. In writing a critical essay, you analyse and discuss specific aspects of a work of literature.

Try your hand at writing a short composition in a style appropriate for literary criticism. Write about anything you want in a tone that you believe is appropriate for literary criticism. If you’re having trouble getting ideas, you might want to try brainstorming or going through past journal entries to trigger a thought. Remember, it’s not what you say that matters here—it’s how you say it.



Lesson 4 has served as a brief introduction to the idea of analyzing and critiquing (or criticizing) a work of literature. Of course, you can, in the same way, critique a work of visual art, an oral presentation, or a mixed-media production like the performance of a play or a movie. As noted earlier, this is a skill you’ll need to develop for English Language Arts 30-1. Lesson 5 will give you the practice you’ll need to be ahead of the game.

Lesson 5: Being a Critical Writer



One thing you'll discover when you sit down to do a piece of critical writing—if you haven't already discovered it—is that it requires some serious thinking. You have to be a critical reader before you can become a critical writer. When you write a **critical essay**, you can do it well only if you've already done some critical reading and thinking.

critical essay

an essay that offers an analysis of one or more aspects of a text or a comparison of two or more texts

Prewriting Strategies

Thesis and Thesis Statement

Even if you're already a critical reader and thinker, you still need a strategy to begin the production of an essay. The very first thing to come up with is a **thesis statement**—the statement, normally appearing in the introduction of your essay, that tells your audience what you'll be trying to establish.

thesis statement

a sentence expressing the main argument of an essay—what the writer wants to establish

Sometimes an essay topic your teacher assigns will supply you with such a statement directly, but at other times you'll be asked to come up with a thesis statement on your own. That will require using some prewriting strategies—something with which you should be familiar by now.



Question! I get confused whenever I hear the word *essay*. I mean, pieces like "Pet Teachers" and "Cowboys and Indians" are essays, but they don't seem to follow the pattern we're always taught in school. There's certainly no thesis statement in the first paragraph that states the main idea of the essay. And not all of the paragraphs support a thesis statement either.

That's a good point. The word *essay* covers a broad spectrum of writing. In fact, I've even heard *essay* defined as any piece of non-fiction prose that doesn't fit into any other category. On the one end of the spectrum are personal essays like "Pet Teachers" with their informal structure, language, and tone; and at the other end are critical or analytical essays like the ones you'll be working on here. They're more formal and more tightly structured.



So this format for essays we're being taught only works for critical essays?



Actually, it will work for any sort of essay that falls toward the formal end of the spectrum. If you're writing an essay to make a serious point and back it up, this is the format to use.



Back to the matter of the thesis statement: imagine that your assignment is to provide a critical response to a certain short story, and because the topic is so broad, you haven't any idea what your thesis statement will be. You first have to arrive at a **thesis**—also called a **controlling idea**; you have to figure out what your main point, or argument, will be. In other words, you have to figure out what you want to say about your topic.

There's a fine difference between a thesis and a thesis statement: a thesis is what you'll argue and a thesis statement is your argument presented in a concise statement. Since it's impossible to present a thesis without expressing it in a statement, illustrating the difference between the two isn't easy. What follows, though, are examples of a thesis expressed in an informal style as well as in a well-structured thesis statement that could occur in the introduction of a critical essay.

- **Thesis:** "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" works because of its vivid imagery.
- **Formal thesis statement:** Dylan Thomas's poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" owes its power principally to the poet's use of vivid imagery.

thesis

the main argument of a writer or speaker; the central point he or she wants to make

controlling idea

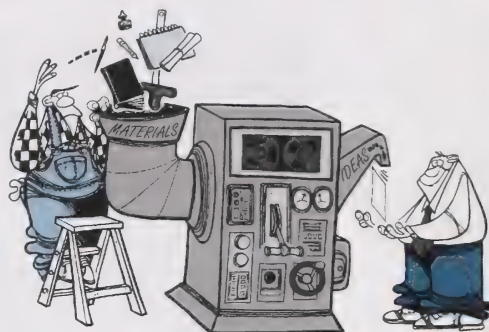
the central point a writer or speaker wants to make



If you'd like to learn more about establishing the controlling idea of a text, refer to the *English Language Arts 20-1 Multimedia Segments* CD-ROM and watch the segment titled "Reviewing the Appropriateness of the Controlling Idea of a Text."

Generating Ideas

But what do you do if you don't know what your thesis will be? You begin by generating ideas about the short story you've been assigned to analyse or critique. You can talk to others, brainstorm, make lists, sit and think, and use any of the other prewriting strategies you thought about in Module 1, until you come up with some ideas.



1. a. When you're assigned to write a critical essay on some aspect of a written, oral, or visual text, what strategies do you normally use to develop a thesis or controlling idea?
- b. Do these strategies work well for you? If not, suggest a few things you might do differently next time.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 5 on page 117.

When starting to brainstorm, it might be a good idea to write down some terms and concepts that can be used in discussing literature. Here's a sample of some of the terms and concepts that you could write down when critiquing a work of literature:

- character
- setting
- plot
- theme
- style
- imagery
- simile
- metaphor
- irony
- satire
- organizing principle
- conflict
- resolution
- climax
- initial incident
- tone
- speaker
- symbol
- point of view
- foreshadowing

These terms—along with many others—appear in the Master Glossary at the end of Module 7, and they’re all dealt with at various points in the course. If you’re unsure of any of these terms, don’t worry; you’ll be familiar with all of them soon enough.

By focusing on terms like these, you can avoid the trap of writing a plot summary or discussing the work to be analysed in a personal way. Don’t fall into these traps. If you do, you aren’t writing critically; you’re merely summarizing or, at best, writing a personal response.

A personal response certainly has its place; it’s very important that as a reader, listener, or viewer, you respond to what the text creator has produced and explain what it means to you. But this isn’t the same as a critique or an analytical response.

2. When you write a critical essay, you can provide evidence for your thesis by quoting directly from the text you’re discussing (which you practised in the preceding lesson) or by summarizing the content of a passage. The question that follows will give you practice in both these approaches as well as in composing a thesis statement.

Imagine that you’ve been asked to write a critical piece on this question:

Why was the speaker in “The Jump Shooter” in a better frame of mind at the end of the poem than he had been at the beginning?

- a. Write a possible thesis statement for your essay.
- b. Quote directly from the poem to provide evidence for your thesis.
- c. Now, without quoting directly, cite content from the poem that supports your thesis.

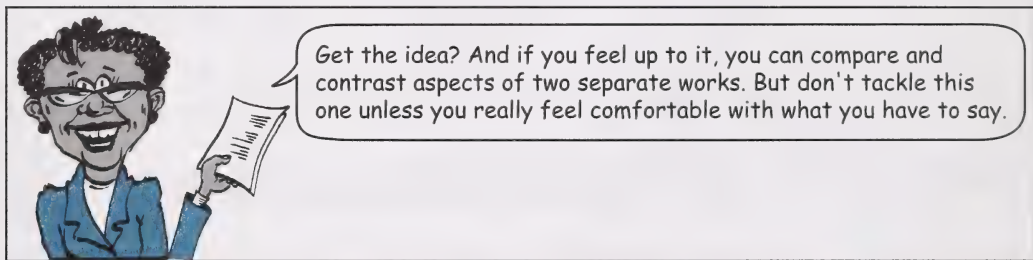


Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 5 on page 117.

In this lesson, you’re going to be laying the groundwork for a critical essay on a piece—or pieces—of literature you’ve read in this course up to this point. The hardest thing is likely going to be deciding on a topic and getting started. But this needn’t be as challenging as you probably think it will be. Don’t try to tackle something too complex; in fact, you should pick something relatively straightforward. The point here is to get some practice in structuring a piece of critical writing.

You're free to come up with, and defend, your own thesis; but in case you have trouble getting an idea, here are a few ideas to help you. You can develop a thesis using one of these ideas, or come up with something that perhaps you find more interesting. In your essay, you can

- analyse the use of irony and/or satire in a work of literature and show how the writer used these devices to achieve his or her purpose
- identify and assess the use of figurative language in a work of literature to achieve a certain effect or result
- explain how imagery or detail is used to create a certain mood or atmosphere in a work of literature
- analyse a writer's use of humour
- explain how a writer's personal beliefs, values, background, and or experiences are reflected in a work of literature



Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 8.

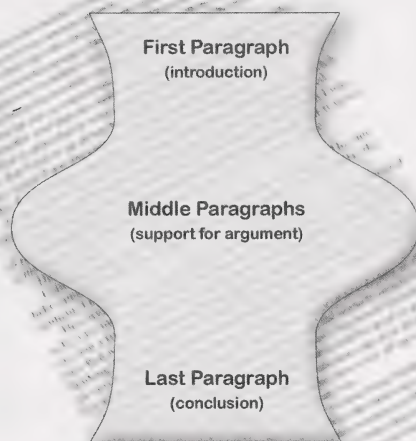
Organizing Your Ideas

After you've generated enough ideas and have decided on what you're interested in proving, you're ready to organize your ideas. Most students find that the best way to start is to write down their thesis statement at the top of a page before they begin to generate and marshal the ideas that will support their thesis.

The Vase-Shaped Model

Traditionally students have been taught to structure a critical essay according to a vase-shaped model. This classic essay structure has stood the test of time and remains a model that you can rely on. You simply structure your essay with these features:

- an introductory paragraph in which you present your thesis statement
- a middle section, usually consisting of three or four paragraphs, in which you present details that support your thesis
- a concluding paragraph that wraps things up, usually by restating your thesis (perhaps using slightly different wording) and highlighting your main supporting evidence



Critics of this model feel that it restricts writers and inhibits experimentation. A confident writer, for example, might prefer to begin by pointing out an interesting detail, moving from there to a thesis statement, and then marshalling more evidence to prove the thesis.

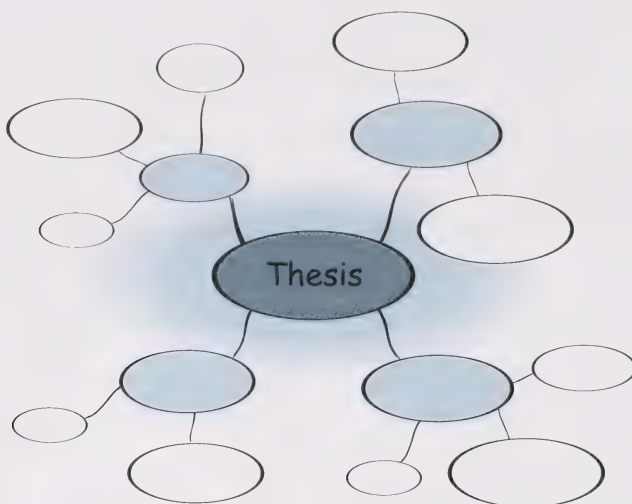
The best thing to do is to stick with the traditional model unless you're very confident of your ability to use a different one successfully. But if you do have this confidence, feel free to test your wings and experiment. Just remember, though, that a critical essay is rather different from a piece of creative writing. With essays, clarity, order, and organization come first. If they can be combined with a creative format, fine; if not, it's the creative format that must be sacrificed.

The Outline

Once you know what your thesis is and have used brainstorming or some other strategy to generate ideas, you may encounter the problem of organizing your work into paragraphs. One thing you can do is use another prewriting technique discussed earlier: webbing or clustering. This will allow you to establish relationships between ideas.

When you web, briefly write down all the things you can think of that relate to your argument and link any similar ideas with lines. Your web might look like the diagram that follows.

When you examine the web, or concept map, you've created around your thesis, you'll begin to see more clearly how your ideas fit together and how you might go about organizing them in a logical structure.



At this point you know your thesis statement and the evidence you'll use to support it. You've created a web or used some other strategy to help you organize your ideas into several paragraphs.

Now it's time to produce an outline. If you're hazy on outlining, refer to Module 1 and take another look at pages 100 to 103 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*. Note that there are examples of two outline formats presented there: the topic outline and the sentence outline. Be sure you understand each of them.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 9.

Drafting the Essay: A Few Thoughts

The good news is that you won't be required to write your entire essay—only parts of it. The discussion that follows will help you with the task of organizing your essay.

The Divisions of the Essay

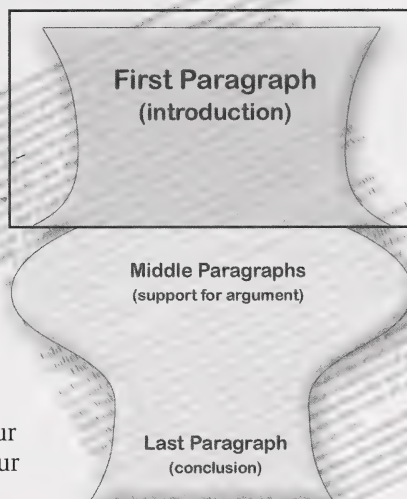
As you've seen, it's best to divide your essay into three distinct parts: the introduction, the middle paragraphs (or body), and the conclusion.

The Introduction

The purpose of an introduction is to move the reader's focus of attention from the world in general to your particular point of interest and to give an indication of what it is you'll be doing in your essay.

Normally this involves presenting your thesis statement. Regardless of how you organize your thoughts, you may find that where you place your thesis statement affects the impact it will have on the audience.

Perhaps you're comfortable placing your thesis statement right at the start of your introduction, like a topic sentence in a paragraph. You may, on the other hand, find it easier to write your introductory paragraph if you place your thesis statement at its end. If you do this, you already know what your last sentence is: your thesis statement. All that's left is to write an introduction that builds up to that statement.



As you're coming up with a thesis statement, consider the messages that the writer is conveying in the piece you're critiquing. If you're struck by a certain word or image, consider the impact it has on you. What idea is the author developing in the words and phrases he or she uses? You might want to use a prewriting technique to help you come up with a useful thesis. If you're still unsure about the content of your thesis statement, go back to the general guidelines for writing effective introductions in Module 1. Or check your handbook for a quick review.

Here's an example. This is a thesis statement relating to the poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night":

In this poem, Dylan Thomas conveys the idea that though death is inevitable, the human response to dying is fraught with mixed feelings.

Now here's an essay introduction in which this sentence is placed right at the end:

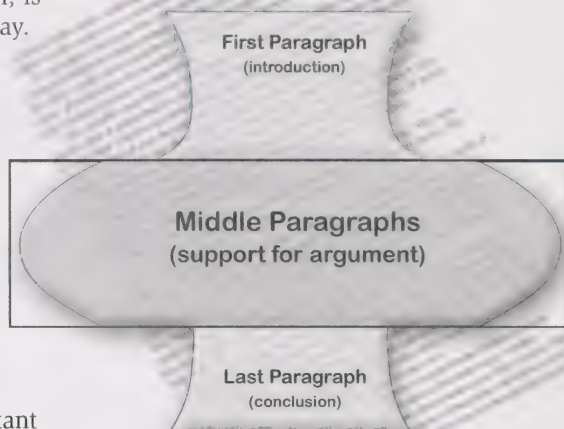
Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" is an intense poem about a son's reaction to witnessing his father nearing his death. The narrator knows that death is inevitable, yet he cannot accept its finality as it approaches his own father. The narrator is torn between feelings of acceptance of what is happening and the pain he experiences in knowing that he will soon lose his father. In this poem, Dylan Thomas conveys the idea that though death is inevitable, the human response to dying is fraught with mixed feelings.

The Middle Paragraphs

The main part of your essay, if you're following the traditional pattern, is often called the *body* of the essay. It's here that you present the facts that you want to use to defend your thesis.

Normally you'd devote a paragraph to each fact or argument you wish to present, so this part of your essay will likely be several paragraphs in length.

Do you remember the earlier discussion of transitions and transitional devices? It's important that you have a smooth transition from your introduction to the body of the essay and that all your subsequent paragraph transitions are smooth as well.



Remember, to do this, you can repeat a word or thought used in a previous sentence, or you can use a transitional expression like *therefore*, *consequently*, *in the same way*, *nevertheless*, or *as a result*. For a review, here's an example of how you can create smooth transitions:

- **Last sentence of paragraph 1:** In this poem, Dylan Thomas conveys the idea that though death is inevitable, the human response to dying is fraught with mixed feelings.
- **First sentence of paragraph 2 (repeating a word):** The speaker uses contrasting words to effectively convey **mixed feelings** about death.
- **First sentence of paragraph 2 (using a transitional expression):** **One of the ways** in which the speaker expresses his mixed feelings about death is through the use of contrasting words.

If you have smooth transitions, your essay will function as a unit rather than a series of separate thoughts.

GOING FURTHER

For more practice in creating effective transitions, do this exercise: clip out **ten** sentences from a newspaper and tape them on a sheet of paper. Pretend that each sentence is the last one in a paragraph, and you have to create the first sentence of the next paragraph. Record yourself reading one sentence on an audiotape; pause the machine while you think, and when you're ready, record the sentence that will begin the next paragraph. Listen to the tape after you're finished to see how smooth your transitions sound.

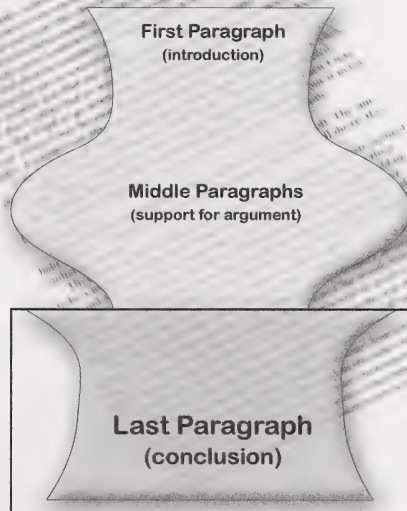
The Conclusion

The conclusion of a formal essay—like a critical or analytical essay—does several things.

- It lets the reader know that your discussion is over.
- It recaps and subtly reinforces your argument.
- It brings your discussion to a logical end.
- It creates a feeling of finality for the reader or listener.

When you're talking to someone on the phone, you always let that person know when the conversation is about to end, don't you? You might say something like "I guess I should get back to my homework," which is a signal to the other person that the talk is almost over.

You should do the same thing in writing an essay; your conclusion should round things off and create a sense of closure. It's not usually a good idea, however, to say "In conclusion, . . ." Try to be more subtle than that. For example, you might say something like "The ultimate result of Dylan Thomas's use of contrast is . . .," which sounds as if you're wrapping things up, but you aren't directly telling the reader that you're doing so.





Kai: Sure, that sounds easy, but I always have problems writing good conclusions. Is there a trick?

Mrs. Davonne: I don't know if I'd call it a trick, but one thing you can do is just go back to your thesis statement and try to develop it into a conclusion.

Kai: So all I have to do is restate my original thesis statement?

Mrs. Davonne: You could, but that's awfully boring and mechanical. Try to be more imaginative. Ask yourself what you can conclude from your thesis; don't just restate it.

Kai: I'm still not sure what you mean!

Mrs. Davonne: O.K. Let's take the thesis that Dylan Thomas uses contrasting words effectively. What can you conclude? Did you feel that the poet's inner turmoil came through because of his word usage? If so, you might begin your conclusion by saying "Thomas's use of contrasting words conveys the torment he was experiencing."

3. Now try your hand at starting conclusions. Imagine that each of the following is a thesis statement of a critical essay you're writing. Write the first sentence of a concluding paragraph for each.
 - a. The vivid imagery in "The Fish" emphasizes the important bond between humans and the natural world.
 - b. In "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," Walt Whitman rejects scientific authority to accentuate the value of emotional responses to nature.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 5 on page 117.

For your own essay, you may find it awkward to write a conclusion without actually having written the essay, but if you made a proper outline, it shouldn't be that difficult. Many students like to proceed this way because it gives them a framework for filling in the middle paragraphs. If, after they have done this, they're no longer happy with the previously written conclusion, they can rewrite the revision stage.

Now open Assignment Booklet 2B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 11.

After you've written the body paragraphs and developed a satisfactory conclusion for your essay, remember that the writing process still isn't over. You must spend some time, preferably with the help of a writing partner, revising and editing until you're quite satisfied with your work. At this stage in the writing process, you're ready to produce your final draft.

A Checklist

Here's a checklist you can use when you write a critical essay. If you get into the habit of referring to it as you work, you should find it quite a help.

Critical Essay Checklist

- ☐ I understand the topic.
- ☐ I understand the literature.
- ☐ I used one or more of the following prewriting strategies effectively to generate ideas.
 - ☐ brainstorming
 - ☐ listing
 - ☐ conferencing
 - ☐ researching
 - ☐ webbing
 - ☐ others
- ☐ I decided on what I'm going to prove—my thesis.
- ☐ I converted my thesis into a concise statement—my thesis statement.

- ☐ I used one or more of the following strategies to come up with ideas to support my thesis.
 - ☐ brainstorming
 - ☐ webbing
 - ☐ analyzing
 - ☐ conferencing
 - ☐ others
- ☐ I used one or both of these strategies to organize my argument.
 - ☐ webbing
 - ☐ outlining
- ☐ My organizing principle—the way I’m organizing my ideas—is the best way to present my arguments.
- ☐ I have written an effective introduction.
- ☐ I have written effective body paragraphs, one for each major point backing up my thesis.
- ☐ I have written an effective conclusion.
- ☐ I revised my work. My arguments flow smoothly.
- ☐ I have created smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs.
- ☐ I edited my work. I was able to enlist the help of another person to proofread and help me in this process.
- ☐ My polished copy is clean, neat, and as error-free as possible. I have made a proper cover page.

In this lesson, you've worked at your skills in writing a critical essay that analyses one or more aspects of a text—or which, perhaps, compares two or more texts in some respect. You'll have more opportunity to develop your critical skills throughout this course, which should serve as a good preparation for the analytical essays you'll be writing in English Language Arts 30-1.



If you'd like more help with writing and structuring essays, and you have access to the Internet, go to a search engine and enter the key words "essay writing." You'll find lots of sites devoted to teaching students the basics—and the finer points—of structuring academic essays.

Conclusion



Section 3 began with a focus on unusual encounters. You read stories related to this theme and, while doing so, you thought about devices like irony, exaggeration, and satire and how writers use them to achieve their purposes. You also read an unusual, “surrealist” story that may have challenged your ideas about the way short stories are written.

In the latter part of the section, the focus shifted away from reading the works of others; instead, you worked on your own critical essay-writing skills. These skills involve developing a thesis, generating ideas in support of it, organizing your material, and structuring your essay. They also include citing material to use in defence of your thesis.

You’ll be using the skills you’ve developed as you work through the remaining modules of this course. This process will begin in Module 3, where you’ll be able to apply your analytical skills to a number of interesting and enjoyable works of literature.

Submit your Assignment Booklet for assessment.

M

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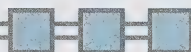


In Module 2 you have, through studying literature, experienced some significant encounters that others have had in their travels through life.

Reading and working with the literature in this module should have helped you become a more critical reader and writer and, perhaps, become more appreciative of the effort and ability required in producing effective literature. In the next module you'll continue your study of literature and practise your own writing skills and analytical abilities further.



Appendix



Glossary

Suggested Responses

Readings

Image Credits

Glossary

acts: major divisions within a long play

allusion: in literature, a reference to someone or something with which the writer assumes readers will be familiar—often an historical, literary, or mythological person or event

anthology: a collection of literary selections by a variety of writers

apostrophe: the addressing of an object or an absent person in a work of literature

backdrop: a large painted cloth hung at the back of the stage to represent a scene or location

caricature: a deliberate satirical exaggeration of a person's characteristics

cite: quote or refer to as an example

cliché: an overused expression

coherence: in writing, the clear connection of ideas and details

controlling idea: the central point a writer or speaker wants to make

controlling metaphor: a dominant metaphor that runs throughout a literary work

costumes: the clothes worn by actors

critical essay: an essay that offers an analysis of one or more aspects of a text or a comparison of two or more texts

critique: a critical appraisal

deus ex machina: an unlikely, contrived ending to a story, usually resulting from the writer's inability to resolve issues in the plot in a realistic manner

dramatic irony: a form of irony in which there is a difference between what the audience knows and what a character believes to be true

editorial cartoon: a cartoon that satires public figures and current situations

figurative language: language that goes beyond its literal meaning

figures of speech: expressions in which words are used in unusual ways to create special effects

free-verse poetry: poetry that has no particular length, structure, rhythm, or rhyme pattern

hyperbole: the use of exaggeration to produce a serious or humorous effect

imagery: words used to "paint" pictures or create sensations for the reader or listener

images: word pictures or phrases that create a sensory experience for readers or listeners

implication: an indirect suggestion or hint

indeterminate ending: an ending to a story that seems unclear as to which way events will go

lighting: the lights used in a dramatic production to increase the visibility of the actors and create mood and atmosphere

literal speech: language that uses words according to their dictionary meanings

medium: a means through which a message is communicated

metaphor: a comparison between two unlike things without using the words *like* or *as*

personification: the assigning of human qualities to non-human subjects

playwrights: people who write plays

props (or properties): objects used by actors during a play, for example, tables, pens, umbrellas, and TV sets

satire: in literature, the ridiculing of human vice or stupidity

scenes: divisions within acts of a play

script: a story, consisting of dialogue and stage directions, written to be performed as a play, film, television show, or radio production

set: the scenery used on a stage; for example, walls between rooms, a staircase, or a door leading to an unseen room on the side

simile: a comparison of two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*

situational irony: a form of irony in which what happens differs from what was expected by both the audience and characters in a piece of literature

sound effects: the sounds created for effects

during a play; for example, gunfire or thunder

stage directions: the information given in a script, usually written in italics, to help readers visualize what is happening and to show actors and directors how to perform the work

stagehands: members of a theatre company who move props, operate the lighting, and generally take care of details behind the scenes of a play

structure: the way a play is put together

surreal: unreal; dream-like

synonyms: words having the same, or very similar, meanings

thesis: the main argument of a writer or speaker; the central point he or she wants to make

thesis statement: a statement expressing the main argument of an essay—what the writer wants to establish

transitional expression: a word or phrase used to link ideas

unity: in writing, a singleness of purpose or focus

verbal irony: a form of irony in which the implicit meaning of a speaker differs from the explicitly stated message

Suggested Responses

Section 1: Lesson 1

1.
 - a. Responses will be personal. Many readers will be left with a feeling of wonder and an impression of the vastness of the universe.
 - b. Responses will vary. Here are a few powerful images that you may have selected:
 - “far-scattered eyes moving against the twinkling darkness of the heavens”
 - “pilgrims to equivalents of dust”
 - “these tiny lights, these beacons, bobbing”
2. Not really. The speaker seems to believe that there must be many worlds full of creatures we can only imagine, but he doesn’t feel dwarfed by this realization. He suggests that these creatures would be much like us, with their own small worries and concerns, though we may never meet them in person. As a result, the speaker contents himself with his own world and refuses to let the possibilities of other worlds affect him.
3.
 - a. The poem makes a comparison between the stars and buoys on the ocean; the stars mark a safe passage to other worlds, much as buoys guide seafarers safely to their destinations. However, the speaker feels that these stars are so far away from Earth that it’s unlikely that humans will ever have contact with the intelligent beings that may inhabit these other worlds.
 - b. Responses will be personal. Did you give reasons for your position?
4. Responses may vary, but chances are that you agree with Mrs. Davonne. “Star-Gaze” is full of images (“far-scattered eyes moving”), sounds (“cannot hear their bell”), and other poetic devices (“these beacons, bobbing”). The poem is rich in meanings and images, as compared with a prose selection, for example, that might have read something like this: “I believe that there are other worlds out there, and they’d be full of creatures with their own concerns and problems—probably a lot like ours. Since I don’t know anything about them, I intend to stay focused on the world I live in.”
5. Responses will be personal. If you can’t remember a poem or a story that evoked the same sort of feelings, can you think of a movie, a painting, or anything else you’ve encountered?
6. Responses will vary, but if you look at all the images and sounds along with the meanings you thought about when working in your Assignment Booklet, it seems likely that you did agree that the poem lives up to the definition.

7. Responses will vary. No doubt you considered things like the following:

- the sound of oars
- the cries of birds
- the thrashing of the crane
- the sound of water flowing

After the first stanza, you may have had more trouble finding appropriate sounds. Did you consider music? If so, what sorts? Did the music change?

Section 1: Lesson 2

1. Miss Riley treated her students with warmth and allowed for individual creativity. You may have noticed other positive traits.
2. Responses will vary, but you shouldn't have had much trouble finding a vivid paragraph full of lively and colourful details.
3. Responses will be personal. The important thing is to be aware that every individual contributes a lifetime of experiences to every work of literature he or she encounters, and those experiences colour the way that individuals will respond to the literature. This is also true, of course, with visual and aural communication as well. It's something you should always be aware of whenever you interact with a text of any sort.
4. Responses will vary, but unless your vocabulary is exceptional, chances are that you encountered some unfamiliar words in this essay.
5. Strategies you suggested likely include the following:
 - use the context in which the word occurs to obtain a meaning
 - see if the word looks similar to others you already know (For example, *tutelage* might remind you of *tutor*.)
 - look the words up in a dictionary—either in book format or online
 - ask someone who would likely know
6. Writers use allusions that they expect their audience to recognize and understand. A writer who uses many allusions from Shakespeare's plays, for instance, clearly expects that his or her readers will be familiar with Shakespeare. A writer who frequently alludes to classical literature or Hindu scriptures obviously has in mind an audience steeped in the ancient world or brought up in the Hindu religion. Writers who include many allusions of all sorts seem to expect their audience to be knowledgeable in a broad sense.

7. Responses will vary somewhat. Here are a few things you might have thought of:

- ask someone who would likely know
- find the words in an encyclopedia or dictionary
- do an online search using a search engine
- use context clues to give you the likely meaning

Did you think of other strategies?

8. The two people communicated at a nonverbal level (in an unspoken way). They knew the rules of the game they played, and each probably knew how the other felt since they were both aging athletes. Because they had enough in common, they didn't need words.

9. Clearly the speaker's mood was greatly improved by the end of the poem. Here are some possible explanations:

- He felt better simply because of the pleasure anyone gets from watching an expert at work.
- He felt better because he realized that aging doesn't necessarily destroy ability.
- He felt better simply because he'd slipped back momentarily into his youth and forgotten his adult cares.
- He felt better because he had a great workout.
- He felt better because he'd communicated with another human being—albeit in an unconventional way.

Perhaps you thought of another reason.

10. The speaker had seen his opponent do something truly magical, and it made his evening complete. He probably wanted to leave on that high note rather than keep playing until his opponent tired and, perhaps, played less well. The speaker felt wonderful at that moment and didn't want to disrupt his feelings about it.

11. a. Answers will be personal, but any basketball experience would give a reader a quick understanding of the situation. The sights, sounds, and feelings evoked by the poet would be more real and immediate. However, a reader with no familiarity with basketball would probably be able to use similar sorts of experiences—playing road hockey, for instance—to make the poem quickly accessible.

b. Answers will vary. Did you include an explanation along with your quotation?

12. There is no suggested response for this question. What do you think about the speaker's interpretation of the poem? Did you consciously make changes in your own interpretation? Now that you've made your own recording, be sure to share it with at least one other person—your study partner, perhaps, or a family member.

Section 1: Lesson 3

1. It seems that the speaker releases the fish out of admiration for all the trials it has obviously endured over its long life. She admires its endurance and doesn't want to be the one to end its life.
2. The narrator made a decision to let the fish go, and the colours help emphasize and convey the good feelings involved with setting the fish free. The colours are like fireworks celebrating a victory.
3.
 - a. Responses will vary. This poem is full of vivid images; almost every line contains one. The only problem you'll probably have is selecting five or six that you found especially powerful.
 - b. Responses will vary. Did you enjoy coming up with descriptive imagery of this sort? If you found this activity difficult, don't worry; you'll have more practice doing this sort of thing later in the course.
4. Answers will vary somewhat. Think about how simple the writer's story is: she went fishing, caught a wonderful trophy fish—obviously one that had been eluding fishers for years—but out of respect for his age and his achievements, she let him go. Compare this to the highly descriptive poem she wrote, full of evocative imagery, colour, and feeling. Clearly everything that's interesting here is the way the story is told rather than the story itself. The medium is everything.

In your response, did you explain whether or not you agreed with the speaker's decision to release the fish? Did you give your reasons?

Section 1: Lesson 4

1.
 - a. and b. Responses will be personal. Were you able to elicit the help of your study partner?
2. Again, responses will vary from person to person. Try to create a revision checklist that's tailored to your specific needs. As more ideas occur to you, revise the checklist so that it becomes a more effective writing tool.
3. Here's one attempt to give this paragraph unity. Note how just about all the information that doesn't relate directly to canoeing has been deleted. You might have done things a little differently and still improved the coherence of the paragraph.

How do you think it affects the tone and voice of the original?

My favourite summer activity is canoeing. My family has a seventeen-foot fiberglass canoe that we take to the lake whenever we go, and my father and I spend a lot of time on the lake in it. We generally stick close to shore and explore all the nooks and crannies of the shoreline, trying to spot wildlife. When we return, Mom always has a delicious meal ready that we can smell even before we hit the beach. My dream, though, is to make my own fourteen-foot cedar-strip canoe so I can go out by myself. I'll have to improve my woodworking skills first, I guess.

4. a. b. and c. There are no suggested responses for these questions. Be sure to keep your revised work; you'll be needing it for later questions.
5. There is no suggested response for this question. You'll be asked to publish and submit a polished copy of your composition as part of your Section 1 Assignment, so be sure to keep your edited version.
6. a. Neither Alison nor Leroy **is** working.
b. Here **are** the books you lent me.
c. She's one of the girls who **are** coming over.
d. Gage, along with all his classmates, **was** happy just to be alive.
e. Each of us, it seemed (and there were seventeen in all), **was** amazed at the final result.
f. A series of murders **is** what tipped off the police.
g. Marinna and her friends **were** standing at the prearranged meeting spot.
h. There **are** going to be many unhappy fans after that game.
i. He's one of the many people from our school who **are** going to the concert.
j. The winter Olympics **happen** every four years.

Every one of these situations is explained on pages 76 to 80 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*. If there's something you still don't understand after going through these pages carefully, be sure to contact your teacher.

Section 2: Lesson 1

1. a. figurative (personification)
b. figurative (simile)
c. literal (However, depending on the context, it might be a metaphor for something like a time of unhappiness.)
d. literal
e. figurative (metaphor)
2. Answers will vary. Here are some of the similes you might have selected:
- his brown skin hung in strips / like ancient wall-paper
 - and its pattern of darker brown / was like wall-paper
 - shapes like full-blown roses / stained and lost through age
 - I thought of the coarse white flesh / packed in like feathers
 - and the pink swim-bladder / like a big peony
 - —it was more like the tipping / of an object toward the light
 - grim, wet and weapon-like, / hung five old pieces of fish-line
 - Like medals with their ribbons / frayed and wavering

Did you remember to explain why you found each of your selected similes so effective?

3. Responses will vary. Here are a few examples. Perhaps yours are more interesting.

- The clouds were like mountains of snow.
- The rows of stubble were as even as lines on a page.
- The hills in the distance were rolling like the swell of the sea.

4. Responses will vary. Here are some possibilities:

- a. The moon looked like a shiny dinner plate right out of the washer.
- b. The lake was as still as a classroom of students expecting an early-dismissal announcement.
- c. The villain was as shady as the dark side of the moon.

5.

- a. Stars are being compared to sailing ships.
- b. The leaves are being compared to whispering people.
- c. The rubble is being compared to a powerful, mocking human enemy.
- d. The car is being compared to a living thing—human or animal.
- e. The idea is being compared to an electric light.

6. The metaphor seems to be a comparison between human life and driving along a dark, curving, and dangerous road. Human beings on the “road” of life often have to make decisions in the dark, and everyone is in danger of “swerving” and going off the road.

7. Responses will vary. Here are some ideas to compare with your own:

- a. The breeze was a whisper.
- b. The old car was a beast.
- c. That man is an island in the sea of humanity.

8. Responses will vary. Here are some examples:

- a. The playful breeze chased the ball around the yard.
- b. The car snorted, gasped—then rolled over and died.
- c. John Donne may have said that no one is an island, but he seems to be surrounded by water on all sides.

These are trickier, aren't they? That last one was especially tough, so don't worry if it stumped you.

9. Responses will vary. Here are a few ideas:

- The fingers of lightning poked and prodded the house mercilessly.
- The sky glowered menacingly at the house which crouched and waited for the assault.
- The wind picked up the fallen leaves, played with them, and left them scattered when it tired of the game.

Did you have problems ascribing human qualities to something non-human? If so, the next question should help.

10. Responses will vary. Here are some examples:

- a. The sun smiled down at the travellers.
- b. The clouds swallowed up the little plane.
- c. The car screamed in protest when I turned the ignition key.

Note how in each case the object being described is in some way acting human.

11. Here are two possible examples of personification:

- The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights
- around our group I could hear the wilderness listen

It could be argued that the second example isn't necessarily personification. The wilderness is certainly compared to something alive and listening, but it isn't necessarily human.

12. Responses will vary. Here are some ideas:

- a. Star-lit sky, tell me how far you reach.
- b. Robin, robin, beware the cat.
- c. O, mighty mountains, crowned in snowy majesty, / please give me good skiing today!

13. Responses will vary. Here are a few ideas to serve as examples:

- a. Baba, I wish you were here to guide me now. You always knew just what I should do, but now I'll have to work it out on my own.
- b. Well, old girl, we've been through a lot together, but it looks as if I'm going to have to sell you. I sure hope whoever buys you looks after you as well as I've done.
- c. O reader, all I ask is that you give what I've written your full attention and that you judge it fairly. After that, if you don't like it, so be it. I've done what I could.

Section 2: Lesson 2

1. Everyone's chart will be somewhat different. Here are one student's ideas.

Diamonds and Stars	
Similarities	Differences
• <i>Stars twinkle.</i> • Stars are bright. • Stars are whitish in colour. • Stars are beautiful. • Stars are hard to acquire. • Stars have romantic associations.	• <i>Stars are masses of fire.</i> • <i>Diamonds are crystals.</i> • Stars are unobtainable. • Stars are huge. • Stars don't have a cash value. • Stars don't make good jewellery.

2. Responses will vary. Here are some possibilities:

- a. When I lost my brother’s keys, I thought he’d be extremely upset.
 - b. My boss gave me a pretty nasty lecture over that goof in my report.
 - c. That problem was solved before it became serious.
 - d. The bed was as tight as it could be when I’d finished making it.
 - e. His behaviour was embarrassingly boorish.
 - f. She was terribly impatient to go shopping.
 - g. When you write, avoid using clichés whenever you can.
3. Responses will, of course, vary. Did you have fun? Have you met many people who carry on like this, relying on clichés because they can’t think of anything original to say?

Section 2: Lesson 3

1. a. Responses will vary. Readers or playgoers can tell from her living conditions that she has little money and lives very simply. She has few possessions—really only life’s necessities. The Bible tells us that she’s probably religious. The photos may mean that she was married and had two sons. Her husband’s clothes mean that the family was working class. The uniforms of the boys tell us that they may have fought in the war; and one or both may have died because there are no more recent photos. Finally, Mrs. Taylor’s clothing tells us that she does her best to look after herself and maintain a respectable appearance. All in all, she seems to be a quiet, respectable, but poor elderly woman.
- b. There is no suggested response for this question. It’s to be hoped that you had some fun with this, but the question is more than just a chance to have fun. Readers of plays must develop the ability to visualize sets and characters from stage directions and dialogue; recording what you see on paper is a good way of developing this skill.
2. Responses will vary. Compare your chart to the one that follows.

Story Writer/Novelist	Playwright
• can tell readers directly what characters think and feel	• must use dialogue, action, and soliloquies to reveal the thoughts and feelings of characters
• can use many settings	• is limited to a few settings, depending on the elaborateness of the sets
• can change settings easily	• must change sets to show changes of settings in most cases
• can move characters from place to place easily	• can move characters only within a setting (For further movement, settings must be changed.)

3. Responses will vary somewhat. Sometimes TV shows make use of a wipe: a line that sweeps across the screen erasing one scene and introducing another. Another old standby used to show a lapse of time is to show a clock on the wall and then to show it again indicating that time has moved on. Traditionally, the two shots of the clock might have been divided by wavy lines. Another traditional method of showing the passage of time is to show the characters in the scene in one shot, and following that shot immediately with another showing the same characters but now looking tired, worn, and disheveled.

These methods are all pretty standard and have been used for years, but today's technology allows for more sophisticated methods of making smooth transitions from time to time and place to place. TV producers also know they have more sophisticated audiences today who will be quicker to understand when transitions are indicated, even when those indications are very subtle.

Section 3: Lesson 1

1.
 - a. This is verbal irony. The speaker is saying the opposite of what he means.
 - b. This is dramatic irony. The reader sees what's going on, but some of the story's characters don't.
 - c. This is situational irony (or irony of situation). Neither the reader nor the narrator in the story expected this to happen.
2. Responses will vary. Here are a few ideas:
 - a. . . he can no longer afford gasoline.
 - b. . . she gets involved in a highway accident.
 - c. . . your face breaks out in a rash.
3. Answers will vary somewhat, but you may have used words like *exotic*, *hectic*, or even *chaotic* to describe the Indian market scene. You may also have used the word *ironic*, since the author already keeps undercutting the exoticism of the scene by hinting at the falsity of what the astrologer is doing. Did you remember to include details from the story to explain your response?
4. There can be no suggested response to this question since it might ruin the remainder of the story for you. Be sure to come back later and see if you missed any hints—or whether you picked up on details that foreshadowed later events.
5. Answers will vary. Readers are told in the second paragraph that the astrologer had been forced to leave home suddenly. Did this alert you to the idea that perhaps the astrologer had been involved in a fight or a crime? Since a good short-story writer never includes details like this unless they're important, this hint of things to come should at least have made you wonder.

After the first three paragraphs readers know that the astrologer tells people's fortunes, that he'd had to run from his home, and that his home was two hundred miles away. An active reader might have predicted that whoever he had been involved with in his home village might appear at his stall.

6. a. There isn't enough room for a writer to do justice to more than one or two settings in a short story.
- b. Likewise, a short story has little space to allow a reader to get to know many characters well. A short story should have no more than two to four characters.
- c. A plot, because of the lack of page space, must be relatively straightforward and uncomplicated. The more twists and turns a plot takes, the more space is required to explain it and to resolve it.
- d. Again, the number of sub-themes and the amount of thematic commentary are limited by the relatively few pages in a short story. A short story will usually focus on a particular aspect of a broader theme.
7. a. In most cases the answer would be that converting a feature-length film into a short story would be impossible because the number of characters, settings, and plot complications would cause the short story to become a novel. Of course, there are some films so lacking in substance that a short-story conversion might actually be possible.
- b. Responses will vary. Here are two responses representing differing viewpoints:
- There's much potential. It would be interesting to learn about the protagonist's youth, and the details leading to his attempted killing of another man. It would also be interesting to know more about his marriage, his family life, and his work as an astrologer.
 - There's little potential. The story turns on one single encounter. Expanding it would just lead to boredom on the part of the reader; it would also detract from the ironic ending.

What do you think?

Section 3: Lesson 2

1. Something that's surreal is dream-like. In a dream, things don't seem to connect the way they do in real life; there's an irrational, unreal quality to everything that occurs. Surrealist paintings have this quality; seemingly disconnected, unnatural things are depicted on the same canvas. In a similar way, "The Late Man" seems surreal and dream-like. In your response, you should have been able to point out aspects of the story that support this assertion.
2. Answers will vary. Most mainstream Hollywood movies follow traditional plot sequences because producers, writers, and directors want to make movies that many people will understand, enjoy, and, above all, be willing to pay to see. However, there has always been a secondary strand of so-called "art films" that appeal to a narrower range of people who enjoy being challenged when they sit down in front of a screen. It's a welcome sign that at least some mainstream moviemakers are, these days, borrowing from the techniques used by filmmakers of the latter sort.

Whether or not you enjoy movies of this kind depends largely upon how much exposure you've had to them. Most people find that the more exposure they have to experimental films, the less satisfying they find much of the traditional Hollywood fare.

Section 3: Lesson 3

1. Answers will vary. Here are some responses to compare with your own:

- a. Proof of the family's financial situation exists in the astrologer's wife's reaction to getting some money. She's overjoyed that her daughter will finally get some "sweets" that she had wanted "for so many days now." You may have found other evidence.
 - b. No evidence exists to prove that the astrologer's enemy won't return. A reader can only assume from the astrologer's confidence that the problem is forever over.
 - c. Because no individual names or identity is given to the people, place, or culture, it would seem that the story could take place anywhere. Other suggestions?
 - d. In the fifth section of the story, there is evidence about how much satisfaction and contentment the late man is experiencing: "his face is a ploughed field but his eyes dart about the beach like frightened piranhas" (note the metaphor and simile in one sentence). The man's obsession is taking a toll; he does not appear to be a happy man. Other suggestions?
 - e. Near the beginning of the story, the reader sees that before his strange behaviour started, the man's lateness was a cause for concern—enough to warrant the breaking of the traditional morning silence. This shows that conformity with the behaviour of others can provide some security. Those who conformed were those who worked together; in this way they provided security for each other. Other suggestions?
- 2.
- a. "Hi!" said Alphonse as he stepped out of the car. "How are you?"
 - b. Miranda wondered aloud how she would ever meet all her clients that day.
 - c. "Are you the person who yelled, 'Get me out of here!'" asked Kirsten.
 - d. "And if I ever see you around here again," he added, pointing his finger at me, "you'll regret it!"
 - e. Smiling, she asked, "And just who would you be?"
 - f. "Hey! Get off that lawn!" shouted Mr. Seymor.
 - g. "This," added Lorette, "is the nicest thing anyone ever did for me."

Section 3: Lesson 4

Responses will vary. Here are examples.

1. The writer's use of dialogue at times caused his characters to sound unbelievable.
2. This free-verse poem might have been improved had there been a greater reliance on traditional poetic devices like rhyme, rhythm, and a recognizable structure.

Section 3: Lesson 5

- 1. a. Responses will vary. Frequently, your thesis will be supplied by your teacher or a question on an examination. Coming up with your own thesis can be challenging. Many of the prewriting strategies already discussed in this course should help. If possible, discuss the matter with other students. The most important thing, though, is to understand your task and to be aware of the strategies available to you. Then select those that will most likely do the job.
- b. Responses will vary. People have a bad habit of getting into behaviour patterns and repeating those patterns—even when they’ve been proven not to work. If the strategies you use don’t seem to be working, it’s likely time to try a new approach.

- 2. a. Responses will vary. Here’s an example:

The speaker in “The Jump Shooter” was in a better frame of mind after shooting a few baskets with a stranger because he discovered the importance of living in the moment.

- b. Responses may vary, but the most obvious direct quotations is this one:

made me wave goodbye
breathe deeply and begin
to whistle
as I walked back home.

- c. Responses will vary. You could point out such things as how the speaker felt unhappy at the beginning of the poem, how he watched the man shooting baskets, how he joined him in a silent game, how he enjoyed watching the man’s skill, and how he went home whistling.

- 3. Responses will vary. Here are some samples:

- a. The fireworks-like effect of “rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!” communicates the sense of victory and excitement felt by the speaker as well as her feeling of relief. (Now you could go on to say, “Because of the way this poem ends, a reader cannot help but . . .”)
- b. When a person is made “sick” by an encounter, that person has to have been severely affected and disturbed by that encounter.

Pet Teachers

Erika Ritter

I don't want to give you the erroneous impression that my childhood relationships with teachers were always harmonious. Back in Grade Five, for instance, we had a hideous young woman in dowdily pleated skirts and rimless glasses who made a special project of making my life hell, as she'd made hell of my brother's life before me. But perhaps my own particular set of problems with this malevolent soul can be dated from the day that, impatient to answer a question, I waved my arm vigorously in the air in the time-honoured manner of a student signalling eagerness to be called upon.

What I forgot was that the hand at the end of the waving arm had an uncapped fountain pen in it. Within a few moments, the most alarmingly inexplicable Peacock Blue flecks began to appear on the front of my teacher's white Banlon sweater set. Then on her pale perpetually unhappy-looking countenance, and finally on the lenses of her thick rimless glasses.

Even more astounding to report, the longer I continued to thrash my arm in the air seeking her attention, the thicker the spattering of blue spots upon her person.

Needless to say, it took my teacher less time than it took me to figure out the connection between my arm-waving and the flecking of ink on her front, and while I cannot recall my punishment for this unwitting infraction, it was no doubt swift and horrible—as you'd expect from a woman who could fasten shut the mouth of a talker with Scotch tape, compel a gum-chewer to wear the detected wad on the end of her nose, or lock a child who'd neglected his homework outside the school with no coat or mittens while the classroom thermometer showed an outdoor reading of -30 degrees Fahrenheit.

My Grade Five teacher was an imported

American, and while I don't mean to imply her imperialistic ways were in any sense characteristic of her countrymen, I can without hesitation connect my own feelings of fervent Canadian cultural nationalism to those endless months so long ago that I spent under her doubtful tutelage.

For one thing, she refused to lead us in "O Canada" in the mornings the way the rest of the teachers did. Instead, she taught us with painstaking meticulousness a new song called "My Country 'Tis of Thee", writing the words out on the blackboard until we had them down by rote. Although, as she pointed out, the tune was the same as "God Save the Queen", I felt sure there was something the matter with this new morning anthem. Not the least of the problem was that it had lines in it about "land of the pilgrims' pride", and I was pretty certain that the pilgrims didn't belong to us.

But when I approached her about this, my teacher's eyes flashed behind their rimless lenses, and she launched into her familiar refrain about how unintelligent Canadian children were, compared to American children. It was a charge I could not, even then, take seriously, not from a woman—an American woman at that—who professed to believe that the name of the Great State of Iowa was pronounced *Eye-Oh-Ah*.

In the end, I did what any indignant Canadian would do. I complained to higher authorities—in this case, my mother, who was horrified to learn I was singing a song about "sweet land of li-ber-tee", when everyone knew that Canada was not the sort of nation to inspire such a jingoistic lyric.

After my mother in turn complained to the principal—a man, incidentally, whose eyebrows met in the middle and who insisted to his Grade Eights that the synonym for "crazy" was pronounced "lun-at-ic"—some changes were made

to the Grade Five morning regimen. “God Save the Queen” came in as a hasty replacement for “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”, although it was a long time before any of us, by now massively confused, could remember to end up with “Go-od save the-eh Queen!” instead of “le-et free-duh-um ring!”

Meanwhile, my teacher’s suspicion that I had been the one who’d alerted the Thought Police only exacerbated a relationship already made difficult by the inkspots-on-the-glasses episode. And by the time she discovered that I’d also altered a picture in my social studies textbook so that the overseer of ancient Egyptian pyramid construction looked just like her, the rest of my tenure as a Grade Five student was not worth living, to the point that, eventually, expulsion to the frozen schoolyard seemed a positively balmy fate, compared to the deep-freeze I was experiencing inside the classroom.

It was not, in short, the halcyon experiences of earlier grades, when I was petted and pampered by my teachers, who enjoyed my cheerful eagerness. In fact, my sentence to Grade Five provided my first indication that school could be difficult, and relationships with teachers combative and mutually wary. I began to sense, however dimly, the potential of political leverage available to the trouble-maker, the misfit, the brat, and by the time I got to high school and the restrictive atmosphere of a nun-run life, I had begun to assume that the teacher was the enemy, to be outsmarted and, whenever possible, ignored.

A far cry, altogether, from the good old days—arguably the best old days—of Grade Two, where I was one of thirty or so seven-year-olds who made the inexhaustibly delightful acquaintance of Miss Riley. I frankly loved Miss Riley, and I believe that, to this day, I could pick her out in a crowd, with her red-gold hair and her slightly gummy smile, and her merry laugh which, surely, not even the weight of intervening years could have dulled or diminished.

A significant fact—perhaps *the* significant fact—about Miss Riley was that she had come from England, the first person I had ever met from any place east of Winnipeg. How on earth was it that a pretty (I’m *sure* that she was pretty) and vigorous young woman from Britain should take it into her head to teach Grade Two in a pink-brick primary

school stuck, like an eraser on a sheet of foolscap, on the snow-swept Canadian prairies of the 1950s? Miss Riley never said, and it certainly never occurred to us, at the age of seven, that bleak employment conditions in Europe or any other sharp exigency could have had something to do with her decision to emigrate. Anyway, Miss Riley seemed like the kind of person who did things on the prompting of no other impulse than curiosity, enthusiasm, and unbridled high spirits.

Unlike the sour-faced shrew lying in wait for us in Grade Five, Miss Riley *liked* Canada. She even liked Saskatchewan. At least she insisted that she did, as a troupe of us trailed her around the snowdrifted playground at recess, vying and jostling to be the lucky two who got to clutch Miss Riley’s Albion hands.

Of course, as she gave us clearly to understand, things were very different in England. In England, she said, little boys wore short pants and knee socks, even in the winter, which struck us a hilarious, although, as Miss Riley pointed out, it wasn’t nearly so cold there. Or anywhere.

There were many other things about England that made it different. What we called a “pullover”, girls in England called “a jumper”, and what we called a jumper was known there as a pinafore. You didn’t play Follow-the Leader in England; instead, you followed the Bangalory Man. And spring came in March instead of at the end of May, and a robin was a round and rosy-breasted thing, as opposed to the tall, orange-chested bird that we knew, and schoolchildren over there sang songs like “D’ye Ken John Peel”—which Miss Riley duly taught to us, along with the plot of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Iolanthe*, in which she was playing one of the fairies in a local little-theatre production.

What made it possible to learn so much about England and John Peel and *Iolanthe* was the fact the Miss Riley didn’t adhere much to the curriculum. Nevertheless, she made a point of being eager to help us appreciate what our own culture had to offer as well, even if she was a bit vague sometimes as to what that might be.

In order to induce us to brave the sub-zero weather of a Saskatchewan winter recess, Miss Riley awarded a prize each day to the boy and the girl with the rosiest cheeks. She dug out a song called “Land of the Silver Birch” and made us learn

it, even thought we protested we'd never once seen "the mighty moose wander at will" anywhere in our town. And when the weather finally warmed up at the end of May, Miss Riley insisted that we go on nature hikes around the gumbo-ridden playground so that we could bring back seeds to germinate on pieces of moistened blotting-paper, and neat-looking bugs to inhabit mason jars in the Nature Corner she has instituted at the back of the classroom.

It was the day that the school janitor—a shrivelled but overbearing little German man whom the boys whispered about as "Not-zee"—threw out our Nature display that Miss Riley lost her temper. She came into our classroom to find him heaving seeds, blotting-paper, bugs and all into a metal wastebasket, while haranguing a frozen grouping of us girls about "brinking zuch mezzzy chunk" into the classroom. Her face became as red as her hair, red enough to win any Rosy Cheek Prize going, and she screamed at the janitor in a way that gladdened the hearts of all of us who had been systematically terrorized by him since the first day of Grade One.

But there must have been other irritants than the janitor in Miss Riley's life at our school, despite her perpetually cheerful demeanour. For one thing, our prairie parochialism must have depressed her, in those moments when she found herself missing England most. I remember one day she asked, almost wistfully, whether any of us had been born outside Canada, and one of the boys immediately stuck up his hand to report that his family had come from Estevan.

"Estevan?" You could see Miss Riley brighten with hope, as she contemplated the possibility of some Near Eastern principality, or even a dreary Soviet republic bordering on Lithuania. "Where exactly is Estevan?"

Oh jeez, I thought, what jerks she'll think we are, as I put up *my* hand to let her know that Estevan was close to Weyburn, which was in turn less than two hours' drive away.

Poor Miss Riley. You could tell that she was made both angry and crestfallen by this news, and though she fought to keep these feelings from showing, she virtually snapped at the boy from Estevan, "I said another *country*, not another *town*."

Then there was the time she took it into her head that our Grade Two class should come up with an impromptu entertainment for the edification of the rest of the school, and drilled us in some sort of *cloun-et-mime* dance performed to a scratchy record, after which she assembled all the other grades to watch us perform.

It was a complete disaster. Not only were we under-talented and under-rehearsed; none of the other students could comprehend us as clowns and elves and golliwogs, since we had not a single costume or one prop to our names.

When one of the other teachers professed herself as mystified as the students by our pantomime, I heard Miss Riley wail tearfully, "It's meant to be a work of the *imagination*."

Imagination. A sacred concept to Miss Riley, and no doubt the area in which she benefited pupils like me most. A slave to cigarettes, like most teachers of her generation, Miss Riley would long to repair to the staff room for a restorative puff, and quickly learned that the accepted trick was to leave a moderately entertaining student in charge. That student, in our Grade Two class, often turned out to be me.

I could read well enough to march importantly up to the front of the room and prattle speedily through whole chapters of *Black Beauty*, while somewhere off-camera, Miss Riley smoked, and while the rest of the class alternately sighed and cheered, depending upon whether the news for Beauty and his friends Ginger and Merrylegs was bad or good.

My task became more difficult once *Black Beauty* had been laughed and cried to a conclusion; Miss Riley handed me another horsy story about the highwayman Dick Turpin and his courageous mare, Black Bess, before heading off to the staff room, her deck of Sweet Caporal cork-tips peeking from her pocket.

Dick Turpin and Black Bess mad a wonderful story; it was only when we came galloping to the end that I got into trouble. It seemed that Dick Turpin had been forced to ride his steed mercilessly to elude a trap set by his enemies, and as we neared the conclusion, Black Bess was winded and close to collapse, while my classmates were on the edge of their chairs.

As I read aloud in an excited treble, my eye

went racing ahead to the last paragraph, and I saw some fateful words that indicated the heart of the noble horse was about to burst from her exertions. I couldn't stand it. I clapped the book shut, and started to cry.

"What's the matter?" the rest of the class demanded.

"Black Bess!" I bawled. "She dies!" And immediately the entire class, even the boys, burst into sobs. Poor Miss Riley came hurrying back from the staff room, stale cigarette smoke clinging to her jumper or pullover, to discover her Grade Two class collectively awash with tears.

The wages of imagination were not always so traumatic. Sometimes, when Miss Riley needed a cigarette or had piles of marking to do, she would set me up at the front of the classroom with a piece of chalk in my hand to tell the class an illustrated story. As I recall it, I would have no idea, when I set out, where the story was going to come from, or where it might go. I would merely begin talking, and temporizing by drawing pictures on the blackboard as fast as I could to bring to life the characters I was talking about. Eventually, I guess, I managed to weave a story, cobbled together from fairy tales and TV and whatever else came to mind, that would come to convenient conclusion whenever Miss Riley's assignments were done.

I never had, before or since, a teacher so encouraging of my enthusiasm for inventing stories on the spot. Nor a group of classmates so appreciative of the efforts I made to beguile them. No wonder the news, at the end of the year, that Miss Riley was leaving our school came as a cruel devastation.

Why she'd chosen—or had it chosen *for* her—to leave, we never found out. Was it as a result of having screamed at the janitor? Or was it because she'd mistakenly addressed the visiting Archbishop as "Mr. Grace" the day he came to our school? Had the failed clown-and-elf pageant inspired anger along with derision in the other teachers? Or was it, perhaps, that Miss Riley's enthusiasm for piercing prairie winters was less unbridled than she'd pretended?

Our class, of course, bought Miss Riley a gift on the last day of school. But my best friend and I, motivated by our superior love, decided to pool our savings to purchase for Miss Riley a present of

out own, something worthy of her charms. There was a garish yellow plaster spaniel on sale at Lakeview Hardware, and we bought it, and took it to Miss Riley on the last afternoon, long after everyone else had left the school.

It was scaldingly hot, the ways days could suddenly be on the prairies at the end of June. The desks, I remember, reeked of the Lysol we had all been compelled to clean them out with earlier in the day. I found myself dizzy, both from the emotion of the moment, and from the smell.

Of course Miss Riley loved the plaster spaniel (what she called a "figguh" and what we called an "orn-u-ment"). It was exactly what she'd always wanted, she said. I felt thick-tongued and sick-hearted, trying and failing to articulate to her what she'd meant to us, how I'd miss her, how devastating it was going to be to go into Grade Three, where nobody would ever trust me to step up to the front of the class and concoct a story, illustrated in chalk. So, after some desultory chit-chat, my friend and I left Miss Riley—to dispose of the "figguh" I now assume. I went home, flushed and wretched, to bed, where I remained physically sick with my grief, for several days of the summer vacation.

The weather continued dizzily hot. In a vacant lot across the street from our house, construction was in progress, with huge machines droning an accompaniment to my delirium. I dreamed of Miss Riley hadn't left after all, but each time I awoke, confused, soaked with sweat and with Caterpillar tractors grinding in my ears, she was still gone. Each time that happened, I would burrow back down into the sheets, to dream about her once more, overwhelmed by the first separation of my entire life.

The separations, of course, have come again and again since, although none, perhaps, with the impact of that first piercing loss. Predictably, I have often wished I might run into Miss Riley again, or even hear news of her whereabouts. Oh, I know she is not Miss Riley any more, probably not even in name. Nor crowned with a mane of curly red-gold hair, not young and sprightly and defiant of the stodgy ways of a prosaic little pink-brick school stuck on the grey-green lapel of the prairie like some prosaic orn-u-mental pin.

But I still dream that now, if I saw her, I might

make her understand how the oxygen of imagination she breathed into our circumscribed lives gave me lasting hope. How much I valued the opportunity she gave me to beguile others by making things up.

And how, in the end, I admired her for daring to be quintessentially, if sometimes erroneously, herself—in an environment that decreed, with dull regularity, that one should always be anything but.¹

¹ “Pet Teachers” from *Ritter in Residence* by Erica Ritter. Used by permission, McClelland & Stewart Ltd. *The Canadian Publishers*.

The Jump Shooter

Dennis Trudell

The way the ball
hung there
against the blue or purple

one night last week
across town
at the playground where

I had gone to spare
my wife
from the mood I'd swallowed

and saw in the dusk
a stranger
shooting baskets a few

years older maybe
thirty-five
and overweight a little

beer belly saw him
shooting there
and joined him didn't

ask or anything simply
went over
picked off a rebound

and hooked it back up
while he
smiled I nodded and for

ten minutes or so we
took turns
taking shots and the thing

is neither of us said
a word
and this fellow who's

too heavy now and slow
to play
for any team still had

the old touch seldom
ever missed
kept moving further out

and finally his t-shirt
a gray
and fuzzy blur I stood

under the rim could
almost hear
a high school cheer

begin and fill a gym
while wooden
bleachers rocked he made

three in a row from
twenty feet
moved back two steps

faked out a patch
of darkness
arched another one and

the way the ball
hung there
against the blue or purple

then suddenly filled
the net
made me wave goodbye

breathe deeply and begin
to whistle
as I walked back home.¹

¹ Dennis Trudell, "The Jump Shooter," in *Full Court: A Literary Anthology of Basketball* (New York: Breakaway Books, 1996). Reproduced by permission.

The Fish

Elizabeth Bishop

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wall-paper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wall-paper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
—the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood,
that can cut so badly—
I thought of the coarse white flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.
I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil

seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.
They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
—It was more like the tipping
of an object toward the light.
I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip—
grim, wet, and weapon-like,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.
I stared and stared
and victory filled up
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge
where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange,
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels—until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go.¹

¹ "The Fish" from *THE COMPLETE POEMS 1927-1979* by Elizabeth Bishop. Copyright © 1979, 1983 by Alice Helen Methfessel. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC.

A Trip for Mrs. Taylor

Hugh Garner

Characters

MRS. TAYLOR 75; an old-age pensioner

MRS. CONNELL 50; a landlady

A SOLDIER 21;

A YOUNG WOMAN 25; a young mother of two

GARY; a small boy

NEWSY; a railroad news butcher

CONDUCTOR 60; typical railroad conductor

BUS DRIVER; a city bus driver

Scene 1:

A cheap rooming-house room with a door leading to an upstairs hallway. The furniture consists of a nondescript metal bed on which is an open suitcase, a scruffy kitchen table and two kitchen chairs, a dresser with a mirror, and a low commode upon which is a single-burner electric hotplate holding a small kettle. A tall cardboard wardrobe stands beside the door, its top shelf holding a few pieces of chinaware and two or three cans of food. Hanging beneath the shelf are a couple of dresses and a winter coat. On the dresser is a cheap alarm clock, a large black Bible, a milk bottle holding some drooping flowers, brush and comb, and two framed photographs, one of a moustached workman wearing 1929 Sunday clothes, the other of two young men in World War Two army uniforms.

Mrs. Taylor sits at the table eating a slice of bread and marmalade. On the table are a teapot, cup, and saucer, a half loaf of bread, jar of marmalade, and a can of evaporated milk. Mrs. Taylor is fully dressed, wearing a high-collared black dress, black stockings, and well-polished but run-down black shoes. Her white hair is combed back into a bun.

There is a soft but authoritative knock at the door.

MRS. TAYLOR: (With a startled glance at the door, then around the room)
Yes! Who is it?

MRS. CONNELL: It's me. Mrs. Connell.

MRS. TAYLOR: Just a minute! (Scoops the bread and marmalade from the table

and hurriedly shoves them onto a shelf in the commode, then opens the door)

MRS. CONNELL: (Enters, yawning) Why, you're all dressed up! What's the matter? (She is wearing a dressing gown)

MRS. TAYLOR: Nothing. I've been up since five o'clock. I hope I didn't disturb anybody?

MRS. CONNELL: (Looking around the room) I didn't hear any complaints, and you didn't disturb me, dear. I was awake anyway. It's my bladder again.

MRS. TAYLOR: Oh, I'm so sorry.

MRS. CONNELL: (Transfers her inspections to Mrs. Taylor) Where you goin', to a funeral?

MRS. TAYLOR: (Looking down at herself) No.

MRS. CONNELL: (Stares at suitcase on the bed) Are you goin' away?

MRS. TAYLOR: (Hurriedly, with a smile) Not for long.

MRS. CONNELL: Well, it beats all!

MRS. TAYLOR: I'm just going on a little trip.

MRS. CONNELL: (Petulant) I thought at least you'd tell me. You were goin' without even lettin' me know.

MRS. TAYLOR: No! No, it isn't—it isn't like that at all, Mrs. Connell.

MRS. CONNELL: Well—(Walks to the bed and sits down upon it, peering into the empty suitcase) Are you leavin' town? Takin' a bus?

MRS. TAYLOR: No, I'm catching a train.

MRS. CONNELL: (Smiles) That'll be nice. I always like trains. Most of my travellin' has been on trains. They got busses beat all hollow. Joe and me went clear out to the Coast and back on a train once. That was when he was a company representative, of course. Back in the Depression.

- MRS. TAYLOR: Yes, it must have been nice. *(Pulls a small washbowl from beneath the electric plate and places it on the table. Puts her cup and saucer, knife, spoon, etc. in it.)*
- MRS. CONNELL: Did you hear the Graham's baby coughin' all night?
- MRS. TAYLOR: No.
- MRS. CONNELL: All night I heard it. Sounded like croup to me.
- MRS. TAYLOR: Poor little thing. *(Pours some water into washbowl from the kettle. Gets a dishcloth from the commode and begins washing her dishes. Mrs. Connell makes a useless gesture of fixing her hair.)*
- MRS. CONNELL: I musta nodded off comin' on mornin'. I didn't hear you gettin' up, nor washin' up neither.
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Takes a dishtowel from a short piece of clothesline across the corner of the room and wipes her dishes. Then she begins putting them away on the top shelf of the wardrobe.)* I kept as quiet as I could. I only gave myself a lick 'n' a spit as they say.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Pontifically)* In this weather it's no use tryin' to keep clean, Mrs. Taylor. If this heat wave doesn't let up soon I don't know what'll become of us. Joe said it was a hundred-'n'-twenty down at the shop yesterday.
- MRS. TAYLOR: My goodness! *(She folds the towel carefully and places it back in its place.)*
- MRS. CONNELL: I read in last night's paper where six people died of the heat right here in the city. They say it's hard on them that's over fifty.
- MRS. TAYLOR: It doesn't bother me too much. I'm so thin now...
- MRS. CONNELL: Lucky you! You'll be gettin' away from it for a while.
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Wiping the top of the table with the dishcloth)* I'm so excited I don't know what I'm doing! *(Smiles happily)* It's been years since I went away like this.
- MRS. CONNELL: It seems funny you didn't mention goin' away to me before.
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Easing herself onto a chair)* I didn't think about it till yesterday. I was downtown for a walk and I went into the station to sit down for a minute—the streets were like an oven—and when I saw everybody going away I made up my mind to go too. I walked right over and bought a ticket.
- MRS. CONNELL: Did you win a sweepstakes or somep'n?
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Laughs)* No. *(Looks into the past, wearing a beatific smile)* It came over me all at once. It reminded me of the times in the summer when me and Bert and the boys used to go up to my cousin Flora's in Jamesville. I got the same feeling I used to get then—a warm, picnicy feeling.
- MRS. CONNELL: Is that where you're goin' now?
- MRS. TAYLOR: To Flora's! No, she's been dead since the 'flu epidemic in 'nineteen.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Petulant)* I'm not one to pry, Mrs. Taylor, you know that, but it seems kind of funny you won't tell me where you're goin'.
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Stands up)* It—well, it's kind of a secret. I'll tell you all about it when I come back.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Reluctantly)* Well, all right then.
Mrs. Taylor picks up the dishpan and exits through the door to empty it. In the moment or two before she comes back, Mrs. Connell gets up from the bed

and peers into the wardrobe. She shakes her head sadly. When she hears Mrs. Taylor returning she rushes back to the bed and sits down on the edge of it.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Enters and glances at the clock on the dresser)* I didn't need to get up so early, I guess. *(Places the dishpan in the bottom of the commode)*

MRS. CONNELL: I'm always the same way. *Mrs. Taylor goes to the wardrobe, takes down a heavy dress, and carries it to the side of the bed.*

MRS. CONNELL: You're not takin' that heavy thing with you surely?

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Folds the dress carefully and places it in the suitcase)* Why yes.

MRS. CONNELL: But, my dear, it's too heavy for this time of year. What is it, velvet?

MRS. TAYLOR: Yes. It's the dress Mrs. Eisen gave me last winter for helping her with her cleaning.

MRS. CONNELL: *(Suspiciously)* You're sure you're not leavin' for good?

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Stops on her way to the closet, turns)* My goodness no!

MRS. CONNELL: *(Hurt)* Any time you want to find accommodations somewhere else, you're always free to go, you know.

MRS. TAYLOR: I'm not leaving, Mrs. Connell. *(Goes to wardrobe and takes down a blouse and skirt)* It's just that I think packing up and everything is part of the fun of a trip. *(Carries blouse and skirt to the bed)*

MRS. CONNELL: I hate packin', myself. *Mrs. Taylor puts the blouse and skirt in the suitcase. Goes to the dresser and from a drawer takes some clean folded underwear, handkerchiefs, and black lisle stockings. From another drawer a clean towel and bar of soap*

in its wrapper. Carries these things to the bed and places them in the suitcase.

MRS. CONNELL: *(Watching her)* That bag is too big for what you've got. Let me lend you the small one that Edna gave me last Christmas. It's a light one. *(Brags)* It's air-weight.

MRS. TAYLOR: Thanks, but this'll do fine. I've got some more things to put in yet. *(Takes the two framed photographs from the top of the dresser, smiles at them for a moment, then cleans their glass with her sleeve.)*

MRS. CONNELL: You takin' them too!

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Places the photos in the suitcase)* I couldn't leave them behind.

MRS. CONNELL: *(Laughs and slaps her hands on her thighs)* I've got it now! Johnny sent you money to go see your grandchildren! Isn't that ni—

MRS. TAYLOR: I'm paying my own fare for this trip.

MRS. CONNELL: *(Inquisitive)* But isn't that expensive? Now I know you won a sweepstake. *(Mrs. Taylor smiles and shakes her head.)* It must be nice to be rich. *(An exaggerated primping of her hair)* When I get the old-age pension myself, I'm gonna take trips too.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Sits down on a chair and becomes serious)* Don't wish it on yourself, Mrs. Connell. It might turn out different for you, with your husband living and everything, but it's a struggle, let me tell you, when you're alone. It's nothing but scrimp and scrape all the time to make ends meet. *(Watches her hands as she twists them in her lap)*

MRS. CONNELL: Hey listen, Mrs. Taylor, I wasn't makin' fun of you! Listen, I

- know what a struggle you have gettin' along on a few lousy dollars a month. *(Angrily)* If I had my way I'd make the crooks up in . . .
- MRS. TAYLOR: It's not only the money. There's the terrible loneliness too. You don't know what it's like to be cooped up month after month in a dreary little room, without even a radio to keep you company. Without even a cat or a dog or a—or a canary. Nothing but the four walls. *(Indicates them with a wave of her hand)* And a bed, a dresser, and a—an electric plate.
- MRS. CONNELL: But my dear, I don't mind you havin' a radio or—or a canary.
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Wry smile)* You know I couldn't afford them.
- MRS. CONNELL: Well, it seems to me that your son Johnny could help you out once in a while. There he is with a good job and everythin'—
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Emphatically)* Johnny's a good boy. He's just—forgetful, that's all.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Takes the photograph of the two young soldiers from the suitcase)* I always forget which one of these is Johnny.
- MRS. TAYLOR: *(Gets up from the chair and sits beside Mrs. Connell on the edge of the bed)* The one on the right.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Points at the picture)* I'll bet this one wouldn't have let you live like this if he hadn't—if he was here. That's Bert, isn't it?
- MRS. TAYLOR: He was young Bert. *(Smiles fondly at the photo)* We named him after his father.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Puts the photograph in the suitcase)* He was a fine-lookin' boy.
- MRS. TAYLOR: Both boys were fine. Johnny's a fine boy too.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Puts her arm around Mrs. Taylor's shoulder)* I know he is, dear.
- MRS. TAYLOR: Bert was no better than Johnny.
- MRS. CONNELL: I didn't mean anythin' by what I said. I do think though that after you sendin' him the pipe last Christmas and spendin' all the time you did crochetin' them runners for his wife, that he'd have sent you the fare to go and see your grandchildren. *(Mrs. Taylor walks to the dresser and takes a small tissue-wrapped package from a drawer.)* I'm sure you'd be happier livin' with your own kith and kin than alone like this. If it was me I'd write to him and—
- MRS. TAYLOR: Johnny asked me to go and live with him and Ruth right after the war, but I wouldn't. I've seen women who go and live with their sons and daughters-in-law. There's always squabbling, and they end up either as nuisances or a built-in babysitter. I was always independent, and I ran my own house when I was young. I'll run it now *(Gestures)* even as it is, now I'm old.
- MRS. CONNELL: Well, he could ask you down for a visit, and pay your way. *(Catches sight of package in Mrs. Taylor's hand)* What's that you've got?
- MRS. TAYLOR: Just some old jewelry.
- MRS. CONNELL: *(Holds out her hand)* I've never seen it before. Let's see it, dear. *(Mrs. Taylor unwraps a gold locket and gold chain bangle bearing a small lock, shaped like a heart, and hands them to Mrs. Connell.)* They're lovely!
- MRS. TAYLOR: I've had them for years and years.
- MRS. CONNELL: I always say old jewelry's better than the junk they're peddlin' nowadays. *(Opens the locket*

and peers inside) My, who's the handsome gallant here!

MRS. TAYLOR: (Please) That's Bert, my husband. That picture was taken just after we were married.

MRS. CONNELL: He looks like a banker.

MRS. TAYLOR: (Laughs) When that was taken he was teamster for a lumber company.

MRS. CONNELL: It was honest work.

MRS. TAYLOR: (Takes the locket and stares at the photograph) He was always a good provider, till he took sick. It took all our savings. And with the boys being overseas at the time and all . . .

MRS. CONNELL: You don't need to tell me how it is. (Admires the other pieces of jewelry) This bangle is beautiful. My mother had one exactly like it, but she gave it to my sister Amy just before she passed away. Have you got the key for it?

MRS. TAYLOR: (Slips the bangle over her wrist) I lost the key a long time ago, but my hand is so thin now I can put it on without undoing it.

MRS. CONNELL: Put the locket on too, Mrs. Taylor.

Mrs. Taylor fastens the chain of the locket around her neck, and admires herself in the dresser mirror. Mrs. Connell gets up from the bed and joins her in front of the dresser.

MRS. CONNELL: Why, you look just like a lady! Like Lady—like Lady Godiva! You look real elegant! (Mrs. Taylor takes a box of rouge from the dresser drawer and with a guilty wink at her companion rubs a bit of it on her cheeks.) Whee! (Both laugh conspiratorially.) Don't be pickin' up no movie stars on the train! (Mrs. Taylor takes a straw

flower-bordered hat from the bottom drawer of the dresser. Mrs. Connell reaches for it, and then holds it in her hand, admiring it.) My goodness! A new hat too!

MRS. TAYLOR: (Beaming) I've had it for ages, silly. The flowers are new though. I bought them at the five-and-ten.

MRS. CONNELL: (Puts the hat on top of her uncombed hair and with her hands on her hips gazes at herself in the mirror. Pulling a face) Did you ever see anything so repulsive in your life?

MAN'S VOICE: (Coming from downstairs) Clara!

MRS. CONNELL: (Removing the hat and handing it to Mrs. Taylor) There's the bull-of-the-woods. (Shouts) I'm coming! Keep your shirt on! (To Mrs. Taylor) Drop in on your way out. (Looks at the clock) I hope I haven't made you late. What time does your train leave?

MRS. TAYLOR: (Places the hat on the dresser) Eight o'clock—that's eight Standard Time.

MRS. CONNELL: What's that, seven our time?

MRS. TAYLOR: No, nine.

MRS. CONNELL: Why, you've got hours yet! Look, dear, you lie down for a while. As soon as I get his lordship off to work I'll come back and see you.

MAN'S VOICE: (From downstairs) Clara!

MRS. CONNELL: Oh shut up! (She exits.) As soon as the landlady has gone, Mrs. Taylor checks the contents of her suitcase, smiling happily to herself. She begins to fasten the case, then halts as she remembers something she has left out. She walks to the dresser and takes a large heavy Bible from the bottom drawer. She weighs it in her hands in

indecision, then brushes it lovingly with her sleeve before carrying it to the bed. She opens the suitcase and makes a place for the Bible beneath the clothing. Then she fastens the case again with an air of finality and lifts it heavily to the floor. She lies down on the bed and stares at the ceiling, a pleasurable smile of anticipation lighting her face.

CURTAIN

Scene 2:

The interior of a large city railroad station on a summer morning. There is an archway above which is a sign "Track 12". To the side of this archway a sign reads "Lakeshore Express" and beneath it, from top to bottom, are signs fitted in slots: Oshawa, Port Hope, Belleville, Kingston, Brockville, Cornwall, Montreal. The archway is flanked by a pair of waist-high iron railings, and a railroad gateman sits on a tall wooden stool. There is a queue of waiting passengers lined up before the gate.

Mrs. Taylor comes on stage accompanied by a young soldier carrying her suitcase. They come to a halt away from the line of people. Mrs. Taylor wears her flowered hat and is carrying a worn leather purse. The soldier lowers her suitcase to the floor.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Excited and out of breath)* I'm glad I made it in time.

SOLDIER: *(Glances at the queue and then at his watch)* The train doesn't leave for a half hour yet.

MRS. TAYLOR: I know, but I was afraid to miss it. You see, I've been looking forward to this trip for so long.

SOLDIER: Have you bought your ticket yet?

MRS. TAYLOR: Yes, thank you. I bought it yesterday.

SOLDIER: That was a good idea. *(Points behind him at the gateman)* You'll have to show it to him.

MRS. TAYLOR: Yes. *(Glances at the gateman and back again)* It was good of

SOLDIER:

MRS. TAYLOR:

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:

MRS. TAYLOR:

SOLDIER:

MRS. TAYLOR:

SOLDIER:

MRS. TAYLOR:

SOLDIER:

MRS. TAYLOR:

SOLDIER:

MRS. TAYLOR:

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:

MRS. TAYLOR:

SOLDIER:

MRS. TAYLOR:

you to carry my bag from the street. I don't think I'd have been able to carry it all that way by myself.

It was no trouble at all. It sure is heavy though. *(Smiles)* What are you carrying in it, gold bricks?

(Serious) Oh no! It's just my things. *(Notices he is joking and smiles)* I've got my Bible in it. It belonged to my husband's family for years. I knew it would weigh me down, but I just couldn't go anywhere without it. *(The Soldier nods.)*

Mr. C.A. Staples, come to the Green Light please!

Mr. C.A. Staples, come to the Green Light please!

You're pretty young to be in the army.

I'm twenty-one. Starting my second hitch.

Are you taking the Montreal train?

No, I'm going north to the camp I'm stationed at. *(Looks across the station)* Everybody in the city seems to be taking my train. I hope I get a seat.

Oh, I hope you do too! Here I am gabbing with you, and—

It's okay. I'll get a seat all right.

Have you been visiting your mother?

My mother! *(Begins to laugh but changes his mind)* No. That is—well, my people live in Red Deer, Alberta.

My goodness! Away out there?

Last call for the northbound train! Passengers for Barrie, Camp Borden, Bala, Muskoka, MacTier, North Bay, and Sudbury. Train now leaving on Track Seven! A-a-a-all a-b-o-o-oard!

That's your train! Don't miss it.

I don't suppose it'll matter much whether I do or not.

Is there another one later?

SOLDIER: No, but I've overstayed my leave anyhow.

MRS. TAYLOR: Well, they might let you off if you go back now. It'll be much worse for you the longer you stay away.

SOLDIER: *(Smiles down at her)* Don't worry about me. I'll carry your bag over to the end of the line-up for your train. *(Picks up the bag and with Mrs. Taylor following him, puts it down at the end of the queue.)* Will you be able to manage with it now?

MRS. TAYLOR: I'll manage fine now, thank you.

SOLDIER: Goodbye. *(Starts to walk away)*

MRS. TAYLOR: Son! *(The Soldier stops and turns.)* I didn't mean to butt into your business. For a minute... Well, you see, both my own boys were soldiers in the war. The youngest one, Bert—named after his father—well, he didn't come back. Just for a minute you reminded me—

SOLDIER: *(Walks over quickly and kisses her on the cheek)* It's okay, ma'am. *(Smiles)* Goodbye—goodbye, Ma. *(Swings around and hurries away)*

MRS. TAYLOR: Goodbye, son—and thank you! *(The Soldier exits.)* Good luck! Good luck to you, son. *(Stares after him)*

The queue begins moving towards the archway. A man picks up Mrs. Taylor's bag and carrying it as well as his own walks past the gatekeeper. Mrs. Taylor pulls a small pasteboard ticket from her purse and shows it to the gatekeeper as she passes.

CURTAIN

Scene 3:

A section of a railway day-coach. We see one line of seats, as if from the cut-away opposite wall of the car. On one of the seats sits a

young woman holding a blanket-wrapped baby. Between her and the window, on the seat, are a pair of paper shopping bags presumably filled with food, baby bottles, diapers, etc. Next to her, near the aisle, sits a five-year-old boy. On the seat between the boy and his mother lies a large celluloid rattle. The boy is wearing light summer clothes, and is bored and restless. His mother is neatly but cheaply dressed in summer clothing, probably Levis and a blouse or sweater. She has the harried, tired look of a woman travelling with young children. People pass down the aisle of the coach searching for seats. A fat man carrying a suitcase makes as if to take the empty seat opposite the young woman with the children, then changes his mind and moves on. The young woman places the baby on the empty, opposite-seat, and places the shopping bags on it too. The young boy picks up the rattle and shakes it loudly while his mother is busy with the baby and the shopping bags.

YOUNG WOMAN: Gary, stop that right now!
(Takes the rattle from him)

Mrs. Taylor enters the car, lugging her heavy bag, and pauses at the end of the seat holding the baby and the Young Woman's paper bags. She droops, leans against the seat and lowers the bag to the floor. She smiles down at the sleeping baby, then at the Young Woman.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Lifts the boy to floor)* Gary, you sit over there at the window and watch the choo-choos. Mind the baby now! *(The small boy moves to the seat opposite his mother, and presses his face against the window, staring outside. The Young Woman indicating the seat vacated by the boy, smiles up at Mrs. Taylor.)* You can sit here if you like.

MRS. TAYLOR: Thank you. *(She shoves her suitcase along the floor between the seats and sits down gratefully.)*

YOUNG WOMAN: Would you like me to put your

bag up on the rack?

MRS. TAYLOR: It'll be all right there. That is if it won't be in your way?

YOUNG WOMAN: No. It's all right there.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Shaking the neck of her dress*) It's awfully warm, isn't it?

YOUNG WOMAN: I'll say! (*She bends forward in the seat.*) Gary, be still before you kick the baby.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Looking at the little boy*) It's the heat that makes them restless.

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Sits up straight again*) He's been a little devil all morning. He thinks he can get away with it on a train.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Smiling at the other*) I know. I had two boys myself. Is the baby a boy too?

YOUNG WOMAN: Yes. Four months.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Bends to look at him*) He's a big boy for four months, isn't he?

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Smiling fondly at the baby*) Yes. (*Both women smile down at the sleeping baby, then at each other.*)

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Turning to Young Woman*) Are you going far?

YOUNG WOMAN: To Bathurst, New Brunswick.

MRS. TAYLOR: My goodness! That's an awful long way.

YOUNG WOMAN: You get used to it. My husband's got a job there with a mining company. I wanted my mother to see the baby, that's why I made this trip.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Wistfully*) I'll bet she was pleased.

YOUNG WOMAN: Oh yes. We wanted her to come back with us for a month or two, but her arthritis is bad.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Nods*) It would have been nice for your mother. (*Changing the subject*) My landlady has trouble with her back. Lumbago I guess it is.

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Nods politely*)

MRS. TAYLOR: I love travelling, don't you?

People seem more friendly somehow than they do at other times. I don't often get a chance to meet people like this. (*Looks around the car*) The people are just like I hoped they would be.

YOUNG WOMAN: They're always the same.

MRS. TAYLOR: I was so excited this morning! I got up at five. (*Lowers her voice*) Do you know, this is going to be my first train trip since my husband died.

YOUNG WOMAN: It'll be a change for you. How long has it been?

MRS. TAYLOR: Let's see—(*Stares at the ceiling as she thinks*) Nearly fourteen years.

YOUNG WOMAN: Fourteen years, my goodness! I suppose you live with one of your children?

MRS. TAYLOR: No. I get my old-age pension. I have a room of my own, in a rooming house.

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Sympathetically*) But—

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Hurriedly*) My oldest boy lives in Montreal, you see. He's married with two small daughters. My youngest one, Bert, was killed in the war. In Italy.

YOUNG WOMAN: It's none of my business, but can't you stay with your married son?

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Her face dropping*) Oh, I couldn't do that. My landlady, Mrs. Connell, is always saying the same thing, but I tell her I'm too independent. *The train gives a slight lurch, indicated by both women being jarred back against the seat. The Young Woman bends forward to guard the baby against being toppled to the floor.*

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Sitting up straight again*) Well, we're on our way at last.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*Beaming*) I can hardly believe it.

YOUNG WOMAN: (*To Gary*) You sit up straight,

Gary, and watch the choo-choo trains.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Staring past the Young Woman and through the train window)* I can hardly believe we're moving. It looks as though the station was sliding past.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Leaning over to listen to her son, who is whispering something to her)* Oh no! Not already!

MRS. TAYLOR: They're all the same. *(Smiles at the little boy)*

YOUNG WOMAN: *(With exasperation)* I've never known it to fail. Before we left him I—

MRS. TAYLOR: You take him. I'll look after the baby.

YOUNG WOMAN: Gee, that'll be swell!
The Young Woman stands up and carefully lifts the small boy from the seat and exits with him, holding him by the hand. Mrs. Taylor moves along the seat to the window, and gazes through it in rapt wonderment. Now and again she glances down at the sleeping baby.

NEW BUTCHER: *(Off-stage)* Magazines, candy bars, peanuts, popcorn, soft drinks, Toronto and Montreal morning papers!
(Baby's cry)

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Bends over and plays with the baby)* There, there! Did the naughty man wake him up! *The baby continues to cry*

MRS. TAYLOR: Oh he's hot, poor little tyke! Wait till I loosen his clothes. *The baby continues crying as Mrs. Taylor fusses with him. After a moment or two she glances around indecisively, then lifts him into her arms and settles back in her seat. She smiles down at him in his blanket, rocking him back and fro. The baby's crying sinks to a contented gurgle or two, then*

stops. Mrs. Taylor looks triumphant at first, but as she stares down at him her smile fades and her eyes fill with tears. She stares through the window, trying to wipe her eyes unobtrusively with the knuckles of her hand. Curtain falls momentarily to indicate passage of time. Curtain rises again on same scene as before, but now Mrs. Taylor is sitting against the window with the little boy seated on her lap. The train is now moving at a moderate speed, as indicated by the swaying of the passengers, the sound of the diesel's whistle, and probably a passenger lurching along the aisle to his seat. In the aisle seat sits the Young Woman. She and Mrs. Taylor have obviously been engaged in conversation for some time.

YOUNG WOMAN: . . . A friend of my mother's goes there. Mrs. Bellamy. Do you know her?

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Shaking her head as she tries to remember)* No, I don't think I do. *(Brightens)* Wait a minute! Is she a stout woman with bluish hair, that wears a Persian lamb coat in the winter?

YOUNG WOMAN: Yes that's her.

MRS. TAYLOR: It's a small world, isn't it? *Mrs. Taylor squeezes the small boy's knee with her hand, and points through the window.*

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Turning to the Young Woman)* The city has certainly changed, hasn't it? I was brought up right around here. *(Motions towards the window with her head)* It was nice around here then. There used to be a nice little park where Bert and I used to walk in the evenings. That's where we did our courting.

(Turns to the window again, smiling to herself at the memory)

MRS. TAYLOR: *(After a pause, and turning from the window to face the Young Woman)* The city looks different from a train, somehow. You pass all the people's backyards, and wonder who lives in the houses. All the backyards with clothes on lines hanging in them, and the kiddies playing, and you think of the women in the house washing up after breakfast, and—You must think I'm crazy!

YOUNG WOMAN: No I don't, Mrs. Taylor.

MRS. TAYLOR: I guess that's what I miss most of all—the feeling that I belong with all this. *(Hugging the small boy to her)* I envy you, Norah, with your kiddies still young and everything. I guess I'd give up every one of the rest of my days just to be young again just for an hour or two, with my boys crawling round the floor.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Laying her hand on Mrs. Taylor's forearm)* I know what you mean.

Mrs. Taylor turns away quickly to hide her embarrassment, and whispers to the boy as she points through the window.

YOUNG WOMAN: I'll be glad to see this day go. We'll be in Montreal before supper time. It must make you glad too.

Mrs. Taylor stares at her, suddenly realizing that the other doesn't understand.

YOUNG WOMAN: You must be looking forward to seeing your grandchildren?

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Trying to make light of it)* I'm not going to Montreal today. I can't afford to go that far.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Surprised)* Well—well, where are you going then?

MRS. TAYLOR: Just up the line apiece. It's just

a short trip.

Mrs. Taylor turns and stares through the window again. The Young Woman begins to say something, but changes her mind.

CONDUCTOR: *(Off-stage)* Tickets please! All tickets. Please have your tickets ready.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Picking up her purse from the seat beside her)* Here's the conductor coming for the tickets, Mrs. Taylor.

Mrs. Taylor takes a small piece of pasteboard from her handbag. It is in contrast to the long ribbon of paper that the Young Woman takes from hers.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Turns to the window, then back to her companion)* They're certainly building the city out in every direction. I can remember when all this *(Nods to the window)* was all farmland. And now it's well within the city limits.

YOUNG WOMAN: We won't be out in the real country for miles yet.

The Conductor appears, and begins punching and collecting tickets along the car. Mrs. Taylor stares through the window. The Young Woman looks down at the sleeping baby, moving the blanket from its face.

When the Conductor reaches their seat the Young Woman hands him her ticket. He punches it, tears off a section, and hands it back to her. Then he reaches across the women and places a small slip of cardboard in the window blind. He then takes Mrs. Taylor's ticket, and places it in his pocket.

CONDUCTOR: *(To Mrs. Taylor)* We'll be at your station in a minute, ma'am. In fact we're slowing down now.

Will you get off at the front end of the car please.

Mrs. Taylor stands up with the little boy in her arms. She kisses him and sits him down in the seat where she has been sitting. She picks up her suitcase from the floor. The Young Woman is staring at her openmouthed.

CONDUCTOR: *(Surprised)* You have luggage, Ma'am!

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Apologetically)* Just this bag.

CONDUCTOR: *(Takes the bag from her)* Here, I'll carry it for you.
The Conductor exits, carrying the bag.

MRS. TAYLOR: I'll have to say goodbye to you now. You don't know how much I've enjoyed being with you and the kiddies.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Still surprised)* We've enjoyed it too.

Mrs. Taylor rubs her hand over the little boy's head, then bends down and kisses the baby.

MRS. TAYLOR: You be a good boy now, Gary, won't you. *(To the Young Woman)* You must think I'm crazy just coming this far. You see I've wanted to take a trip for so long, and this was sort of—pretending.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Holding back her tears)* No I don't, Mrs. Taylor. I just wish you were coming all the way. Thanks so much for helping me with the children.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Suddenly shy)* Goodbye, dear, and God bless you. Have a nice journey. *(She walks along the aisle of the car.)*

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Shouting after her)* Thanks! Thanks a lot! *(To the little boy)* Say goodbye to Grandma Taylor, Gary.

The small boy mumbles a goodbye and waves his hand. Mrs. Taylor turns and waves in return before she exits. As the

train begins to move again the Young Woman and the little boy crowd the window waving at someone on the platform.

CURTAIN

Scene 4:

The interior of a city bus. We are facing the Driver from his rear, and he is in profile to the audience. He is collecting fares from two or three passengers, but the bus is almost empty. The Driver is wearing a uniform cap, but his uniform jacket is hanging on a hook beside his seat.

Mrs. Taylor climbs the steps, out of breath and obviously weighted down with the heavy suitcase. She places the suitcase down on the floor, and searches in her purse for the fare.

BUS DRIVER: *(Smiling at her)* You look happy, Ma. You must have had a swell vacation.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Abandons her search in her purse and looks up)* Oh yes. I had a wonderful trip. I'm a little tired though.

BUS DRIVER: I'd never come back to this heat. *(He removes his cap and wipes his forehead on his sleeve.)* Did you just get off a train?

MRS. TAYLOR: Yes, the Montreal train.

BUS DRIVER: *(Enviously)* Montreal, eh? *(Sighs)* It's nice to travel, but it's pretty expensive I guess.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Smiling at a secret thought)* Yes, but it's almost as expensive staying put these days. *(She finds her fare and deposits it in the fare-box.)*

BUS DRIVER: It must be nice to get away from this heat once during the summer anyway.

MRS. TAYLOR: *(Picking up her suitcase)* Yes it is. *(On a sudden, boastful impulse)* I'm taking another trip next month. But that one'll be on the Winnipeg train!

Mrs. Taylor comes downstage towards the audience, limping

a little and lopsided from the weight of the heavy bag. She has to steady herself with her hand on the rear of the seats. Her face lights up and her smile widens as she comes down the aisle of the bus. It is a smile of achievement and triumph beyond happiness.

¹

FINAL CURTAIN

¹ Hugh Garner, "A Trip for Mrs. Taylor," in *Literary Experiences: Volume 1*, Oster, Iveson, McClay (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1974), 213–230. Reproduced by permission.

An Astrologer's Day

R. K. Narayan

Punctually at midday he opened his bag and spread out his professional equipment, which consisted of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a notebook, and a bundle of palmyra writing. His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted. The power of his eyes was considerably enhanced by their position—placed as they were between the painted forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks: even a half-wit's eyes would sparkle in such a setting. To crown the effect he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was a remarkable place in many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians, and, above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in vociferousness came a vendor of fried groundnut, who gave his ware a fancy name each day, calling it 'Bombay Ice-Cream' one day, and on the next 'Delhi Almond,' and on the third 'Raja's Delicacy,' and so on and so forth, and people flocked to him. A considerable portion of this crowd dallied before the astrologer too. The astrologer transacted his business by the light of a flare which cracked and smoked up above the groundnut heap nearby. Half the enchantment of the place was due to the fact that it did not have the benefit of municipal lighting. The place was lit up by shop lights. One or two had hissing gaslights, some had naked flares stuck on poles, some were lit up by old cycle lamps, and one or two, like the astrologer's, managed without lights of their own.

It was a bewildering criss-cross of light rays and moving shadows. This suited the astrologer very well, for the simple reason that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life; and he knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute. He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers. Yet he said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practice, and shrewd guesswork. All the same, it was as much an honest man's labour as any other, and he deserved the wages he carried home at the end of a day.

He had left his village without any previous thought or plan. If he had continued there he would have carried on the work of his forefathers—namely, tilling the land, living, marrying, and ripening in his cornfield and ancestral home. But that was not to be. He had to leave home without telling anyone, and he could not rest till he left it behind a couple of hundred miles. To a villager it is a great deal, as if an ocean flowed between.

He had a working analysis of mankind's troubles: marriage, money, and the tangles of human ties. Long practice had sharpened his perception. Within five minutes he understood what was wrong. He charged three pies per question, never opened his mouth till the other had spoken for at least ten minutes, which provided him enough stuff for a dozen answers and advices. When he told the person before him, gazing at his palm, 'In many ways you are not getting the fullest results for your efforts,' nine out of ten were disposed to agree with him. Or he questioned: 'Is there any woman in your family, maybe even a distant relative, who is not well disposed towards you?' Or he gave an analysis of character: 'Most of your troubles are due to your nature. How can you be otherwise with Saturn where he is? You have an impetuous nature and a rough exterior.' This endeared him to their hearts immediately, for even the mildest of us loves to think that he has a forbidding exterior.

The nuts vendor blew out his flare and rose to

go home. This was a signal for the astrologer to bundle up too, since it left him in darkness except for a little shaft of green light which strayed in from somewhere and touched the ground before him. He picked up his cowrie shells and paraphernalia and was putting them back into his bag when the green shaft of light was blotted out; he looked up and saw a man standing before him. He sensed a possible client and said: 'You look so careworn. It will do you good to sit down for a while and chat with me.' The other grumbled some reply vaguely. The astrologer pressed his invitation; whereupon the other thrust his palm under his nose, saying: 'You call yourself an astrologer?' The astrologer felt challenged and said, tilting the other's palm towards the green shaft of light: 'Yours is a nature...' 'Oh, stop that,' the other said. 'Tell me something worth while...'

Our friend felt piqued. 'I charge only three pies per question, and what you get ought to be good enough for your money...' At this the other withdrew his arm, took out an anna, and flung it out to him, saying: 'I have some questions to ask. If I prove you are bluffing, you must return that anna to me with interest.'

'If you find my answers satisfactory, will you give me five rupees?'

'No.'

'Or will you give me eight annas?'

'All right, provided you give me twice as much if you are wrong,' said the stranger. This pact was accepted after a little further argument. The astrologer sent up a prayer to heaven as the other lit a cheroot. The astrologer caught a glimpse of his face by the matchlight. There was a pause as cars hooted on the road, *jutka* drivers swore at their horses, and the babble of the crowd agitated the semi-darkness of the park. The other sat down, sucking his cheroot, puffing out, sat there ruthlessly. The astrologer felt very uncomfortable. 'Here, take your anna back. I am not used to such challenges. It is late for me today...' He made preparations to bundle up. The other held his wrist and said: 'You can't get out of it now. You dragged me in while I was passing.' The astrologer shivered in his grip; and his voice shook and became faint. 'Leave me today. I will speak to you tomorrow.' The other thrust his palm in his face and said: 'Challenge is challenge. Go on.' The astrologer

proceeded with his throat drying up: 'There is a woman...'

'Stop,' said the other. 'I don't want all that. Shall I succeed in my present search or not? Answer this and go. Otherwise I will not let you go till you disgorge all your coins.' The astrologer muttered a few incantations and replied: 'All right. I will speak. But you will give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like.' After a good deal of haggling the other agreed. The astrologer said: 'You were left for dead. Am I right?'

'Ah, tell me more.'

'A knife has passed through you once,' said the astrologer.

'Good fellow!' He bared his chest to show the scar. 'What else?'

'And then you were pushed into a well nearby in the field. You were left for dead.'

'I should have been dead if some passer-by had not chanced to peep into the well,' exclaimed the other, overwhelmed by enthusiasm. 'When shall I get at him?' he asked, clenching his fist.

'In the next world,' answered the astrologer. 'He died four months ago in a far-off town. You will never see any more of him.' The other groaned on hearing it. The astrologer proceeded:

'Guru Nayak—'

'You know my name!' the other said, taken aback.

'As I know all other things. Guru Nayak, listen carefully to what I have to say. Your village is two days' journey due north of this town. Take the next train and be gone. I see once again great danger to your life if you go from home.' He took out a pinch of sacred ash and held it to him. 'Rub it on your forehead and go home. Never travel southward again, and you will live to be a hundred.'

'Why should I leave home again?' the other said reflectively. 'I was only going away now and then to look for him and to choke out his life if I met him.' He shook his head regretfully. 'He has escaped my hands. I hope at least he died as he deserved.' 'Yes,' said the astrologer. 'He was crushed under a lorry.' The other looked gratified to hear it.

The place was deserted by the time the astrologer picked up his articles and put them into his bag. The green shaft was also gone, leaving

the place in darkness and silence. The stranger had gone off into the night, after giving the astrologer a handful of coins.

It was nearly midnight when the astrologer reached home. His wife was waiting for him at the door and demanded an explanation. He flung the coins at her and said: 'Count them. One man gave all that.'

'Twelve and a half annas,' she said, counting. She was overjoyed. 'I can buy some jaggery and coconut tomorrow. The child has been asking for sweets for so many days now. I will prepare some nice stuff for her.'

'The swine has cheated me! He promised me a rupee,' said the astrologer. She looked up at him.

'You look worried. What is wrong?'

'Nothing.'

After dinner, sitting on the *pyol*, he told her: 'Do you know a great load is gone from me today? I thought I had the blood of a man on my hands all these years. That was the reason why I ran away from home, settled here, and married you. He is alive.'

She gasped. 'You tried to kill!'

'Yes, in our village, when I was a silly youngster. We drank, gambled, and quarreled badly one day—why think of it now? Time to sleep,' he said, yawning, and stretched himself on the *pyol*.¹

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The Late Man

Andreas Schroeder

On the morning after the storm, the fishermen got up earlier than usual to survey the damage and repair what could be saved. Unusually strong winds and rain had scattered the nets and flattened gardens, bushes, even trees. Fishing boats lay strewn about the beach like broken teeth. Everywhere an exhausted silence hung limply; even the occasional seagull screech seemed blunted and uncertain. Across the mud-flats the faint rush of breakers seemed to fade, though the tide was coming in, slowly and without apparent conviction.

At this time in the morning the fishermen rarely spoke. They arranged their lines, oiled pulleys, checked over their engines and wordlessly pushed out to sea. To break the fragile silence of the first few hours would have been like bursting a delicate membrane without preparation; it was tacitly understood that a man needed more time to clear away in his mind the rubble and destruction of the preceding night, than was available to him between his getting up and the launching of his boat. Even after they had cleared the beach and set their course for the large fishing-grounds farther north, the fishermen rarely raised their voices—as if in instinctive respect for the precariousness of the human mind launched before sunrise on an uncertain sea.

But someone broke the silence that morning; as the last remaining boats poled into deeper water to lower their engines, a young bearded fisherman pointed to a single unattended boat lying on its side on the beach and asked in a low voice: “Where’s he?”

The man being addressed looked startled, puzzled, then shrugged his shoulders.

The bearded fisherman risked a further offence. “Could he be sick, d’you think?”

There was no response. The other man slid his oar into the water and pushed them off.

A man opens his cabin door and steps into view. He is the late man, the man whose boat lies untouched on the beach below his cabin. There is nothing particularly unusual about this man except

perhaps a certain slight hesitance in his manner; the hesitance of a man for whom the world became at some point intensely suspect, for whom, at that point, a glass on a table became less and less a glass on a table and more and more a thing too strange and amazing to grasp by name. As he stands in his doorway, his hand rests gingerly on the frame, as if constantly ready in case of attack.

About fifteen minutes have passed since the last boat was launched and the late man stepped from his cabin. Now, his boat ready and his outboard spluttering half-submerged, he pushes off and follows the fleet toward the fishing-grounds.

A few hours later the fishing village begins to yawn, stretch and get up; children and fishwives clutter the streets and tangle the air with punctuation marks.

When they return in the early evening and pull their boats out of the water above the high-tide markers, the late man is not with them. During the interval of time between the last fisherman’s ascent from his stranded boat to his waiting dinner and the late man’s arrival at the launching site fifteen minutes later, silence holds the breach like an indrawn breath. The sound of his prow on the pebbles, therefore, grates in an unusually harsh way on the nerves of the woman waiting for him above the high-tide markers. He has caught fewer fish than the other fishermen.

The next morning the late man appears at his cabin door half an hour after the fisherman have left the beach. Their boats are already vague in the distance when he finally manages to haul his boat to the water-line, which has by this time fallen far below his landing place with the receding tide. He seems somehow weakened, older, leaning wearily against the wheel of his boat. When the fishermen return that night he is an uncertain speck on the horizon, half an hour behind the last of the fishing fleet, and when the catch is scored, he has caught fewer fish than the day before.

Around noon the following day the boats were anchored in clusters to share both lunch and small-

talk on the fishing grounds, and the conversation turned to the late man. "Can't figure 'im out," one fisherman mused, pulling thoughtfully at his beard. "Won't tell nobody what's wrong." "Ain't sayin' a thing," another agreed. "Asked him yesterday what the problem was, but I'll be damned if he didn't seem like he wasn't even listening." There was a pause as if to let the spoken words disperse. Then: "Sea can do that to a man. Catches up with him, it does." The speaker slowly shook his head, threw an orange peel overboard, then absently ignored a deck-hand who had asked him what he meant. The deck-hand finally turned away, assuming his question was naïve; he was new in the fleet and often found himself going unanswered. As it was, he was already on the other side of the boat when the old man muttered his answer to no one in particular: "I don't know what happens; I just know it does. Ain't no man can whirl the world by hand."

The next morning the late man launched his boat some forty-five minutes after the fleet had left the beach.

Little is known of the late man's history, though this is not realized until he first begins to attract attention by his mystifying dislocation of schedule; suddenly everyone rummages about in their memory for initial impressions, former opinions, latent suspicions, old predictions. Little in the way of substantial information is collected. It is generally agreed that he is a relatively young man, hard-working and "well-disciplined". Some felt him to be a little too much given to reflection, but one suspects this is said chiefly in reaction to his if not exactly anti-social, at least fairly reticent manner. He cares little for other people, though he has been known to go to the aid of a complete stranger for no reason. A slightly more observant villager notes his peculiar tendency to touch (with a curiously disbelieving air) whatever happens to be around him; the remark is received in uncertain silence. Many frankly admit they have no idea what to make of the whole business, and that the man is probably simply under the attack of some unsettling virus. This fails to explain, however (as someone quickly points out), his consistent, almost plan-like deceleration of pace in relation to the normal fishing schedule of the village—by this time he is reported leaving the beach a full three hours

after the last of the other boats has been launched.

By the time the late man pulls his boat from the water, the sun is little more than an almost-submerged leer on a mindless horizon and the waves have jelled to heavy, slowly swirling jibes. Night winds begin to cover the eastern part of the sky with a thick, cumulous ceiling of ridicule. Sardonic chuckles ripple along the water line where the undertow pursues an endless foreplay with beach gravel. The late man stands motionless, looking strangely as if he belongs neither to the water nor the land; his face is a ploughed field but his eyes dart about the beach like frightened piranhas. His boat is a crazily tilted sneer lying on its side in the pebbles, with rope dangling from the prow like corded spittle. Wave upon wave of curling laughter lampoons the beach. Everywhere, everything grins. The late man no longer defends himself. He has committed the blunder of allowing himself and the universe to discover his detective activities, his secret investigations into the nature and composition of himself and whatever he finds it possible to apprehend. But he has allowed this discovery prematurely, before he has had time to properly anaesthetize his specimens, and now, suddenly aware of a spy in their midst, they have disintegrated into countless labyrinthine possibilities and traps and the late man is cut off without the possibility of retreat.

He has long since given up trying to sledge-hammer his brain to sleep.

But a violated universe will not be satisfied with the simple deflection of an inquisitive mind, and as if to make certain that such a trespassing will never again be possible, it has turned glaring spotlights against the late man's brain, blinding and overwhelming it with confusion and derision. Stiffly aligned principles and corollaries suddenly go limp and begin to collapse; endless qualifications overrun simple premises and leave behind a shambles of tattered and useless shreds of belief. Above all, the horror is set creeping up the back stairs of the late man's mind that all this is beyond his control, and that like a retaining pin pulled from a spring-loaded wheel, this destruction will continue relentlessly until it has unrolled the tension from the spring.

There appears to be little he can do but to hold

on until all is done, and to hope that he does not become so weakened in the process as to fall prey to a useless madness.

In a matter of months the departures and arrivals of the late man and the fishing fleet have diverged to such an extent that the returning fishermen see the late man's boat heading toward them at dusk, on its way north toward open water. He stands huddled over his wheel, eyes staring unseeing at the darkening horizon as if in purposeful blindness. The fishing fleet parts to let him pass; though no one appears to understand, everyone sees the desperate undertow in his eyes and says nothing. When all the boats are secured and the gear locked away, the late man is a dissolving blotch against black evening. A few moments later he is gone.

The late man had returned the previous morning with no fish at all.

As he sat down to dinner, the young fisherman who had asked about the late man early one morning suddenly spoke of him to his wife. "Nobody knows anything, or they won't say anything. Everybody pretends to ignore him. I've got to find out."

His wife said nothing. He looked at her curiously, then threw down his knife. "Well, damn it, here's a man digging his own grave in plain view of a whole fishing village, and nobody has the guts to look into the matter." His wife remained silent but a worried look began to unsettle her face. The young fisherman stood up abruptly. "I'm going to find out," he said, reaching for his squall-jacket and opening the door. "Even if for no other reason than a simple matter of self-defence!" he added as the door slammed shut. Footsteps receded from the cabin. Within minutes the sound of his outboard began to move across the bay toward the fishing grounds and the open sea.

For a time the young fisherman directs his boat through thick total darkness; a bulging cloud cover muffles the moon and the night sways and sidesteps in ponderous movements that are blind but everywhere. The occasional clear splash falls short among the sluggish gurgle and sagging cough of deepwater waves beneath the keel. The young fisherman peers at the bleakness but steers his boat

by instinct.

As he moves farther and farther into deeper water the night begins to thin out; his eyes detect edges, outlines, occasional glimpses of phosphoric glitter—eventually the moon disentangles from the clouds and trudges high into the sky, spraying a fine shower of thin light over the fishing grounds. By this time the young fisherman can make out the dark shape of the late man's boat, lying at anchor on his starboard side. The booms on the boat before him are out, trailing thin glistening lines into the water. The late man is fishing.

The young fisherman sits unmoving at his wheel, uncertain as to what should follow. Possibilities dart in and out of his mind, unwilling to bite. He waits, his brain idling slowly, his thoughts loose.

A creak from a rusty tackle interrupts the silence. A glass float dips and scrambles; the late man comes alive and begins to reel it in. A strike.

The young fisherman straightens up and strains to see. The glass float tugs and splashes at the end of a stiff line; the late man's figure curves against the mast, his arms taut like two rigid claws shaking with exertion. The young fisherman feels an instinctive excitement thrill through his body as if the strike were his own. Something huge is on the end of that line.

The glass float is almost at boat's edge, momentarily calmer. The late man reaches for his fishnet and plunges it over the side, scooping carefully. His back is turned to the young fisherman, obscuring the float as he brings it to the boat's side. The fishnet rises from the water, then stops.

Surprised, the young fisherman leans forward but sees only the hunched back of the late man leaning over his net. A fierce rippling movement shakes the arm holding the handle as something twists and writhes in the meshes, but the late man makes no move to pull it into the boat. Ten minutes pass; the late man still stands bent over his net, gazing at his catch. The young fisherman is unable to see his face.

Finally, in a slow but deliberate movement, the late man empties his net into the sea and straightens up.

The young fisherman watches, still dumfounded, as the late man repeats the same

procedure moments later when another line snaps alive. This time his demeanor seems to indicate recognition or less interest; a short look suffices to make him empty the net again. After a short pause a third float begins to bob and the late man reels it in. Half an hour later he is still engrossed in the net's contents, ignoring all the other lines which are jerking at the boom. Bent over the gunwhale, his hair blowing about his head like spray in the wind, the man stares at his catch in silence, then throws it back into the sea.

As a faint paleness begins to tinge the outermost edges of the dark, the young fisherman stands up stiffly, a nervous flutter in his stomach, strangely excited yet uncertain why. He detects traces of the intoxication of discovery in his feelings, though he has no idea what he has discovered or realized.

Carefully pulling out his oars, he mounts them in the oarlocks and prepares to slip away. By the time the sun appears he will be back in the bay and his cabin. Then there will be time to think.

A small sound from the other boat stops his raised oars short. The late man has emptied his net and stepped back toward the mast. As he half-turns to re-apply bait to one of the lines the young fisherman catches a glimpse of the late man's face. He almost drops his oars.

The late man's face is totally disfigured. Crumpled skin, twitching lips and bleached white hair, he is suddenly old—an uncertain fool barely able to hold his balance in the rocking boat. The young fisherman is stunned. The late man was of the same generation as the others in the fishing fleet—chronologically about thirty years old. Now he looks three times that age.

But there is no time to lose; the horizon is becoming a thin pencil-line of light across the dark and he will be discovered. Stealthily moving his oars, the young fisherman pulls away toward the south and the fishing village.

As his boat moves into the bay, he sees the first cabin doors opening and fishermen walking down the beach toward their boats. Several of them look up, surprised to see his incoming boat at such an odd time. Obviously his wife has said nothing.

He steers toward an unused part of the beach and runs his boat aground.

There, his boat bouncing slightly to the rhythm of his fading wash, he sat on the bow and twisted a piece of rope between his fingers; uncertain, almost nervous, uncertain again. The spreading sun warmed his back as he sat, but his stomach remained cold and unsettled; he felt the desperate urge to run, to commit a violence, tear something to shreds, but somehow he was numbed or simply unable to move. For no apparent reason something seemed to have snapped; his senses coiled and bunched in twisting knots, thoughts whirled in ever-tightening circles about his head and a steadily mounting pressure threatened to explode inside him like a surfacing deepwater fish.

Then the faint growl from a distant engine punctured the silence and the tension drained away with an almost audible hiss. The young fisherman looked over his shoulder and watched the late man's boat increase toward the bay. Several of the other fisherman paused and shaded their eyes. For a short while everything hung in suspension...

Suddenly the late man's boat is in the bay, its engine silent, drifting toward the beach. As its prow gouges into the sand the late man struggles feebly to climb off the deck onto the gravel, half-falling several times in the process. Then hoisting the bow rope over his shoulder, he attempts to pull his boat higher up onto the beach.

Later, after the late man had been buried and the fishermen had returned to their boats, the young fisherman was heard to say that in a totally paralyzed landscape, the only moving thing had been the late man trying to beach his boat. They had watched him for an incredibly long time, trying to raise the bow above the gravel, and when he finally collapsed, still no one had moved. When they eventually began to climb down toward the fallen figure, the landscape seemed to stretch and expand in every direction and they walked for hours before reaching him. They found him lying on his back, his face contorted with a mixture of agony and amazement; it was the oldest face they had ever seen. So they had buried him, quietly and without looking at each other, and the young

fisherman had beached the boat. The next morning, due possibly to the tiring events of the preceding night and day, the young fisherman slept a little longer, and eventually launched his boat some fifteen minutes after the last of the fishing boats had cleared the bay.¹

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